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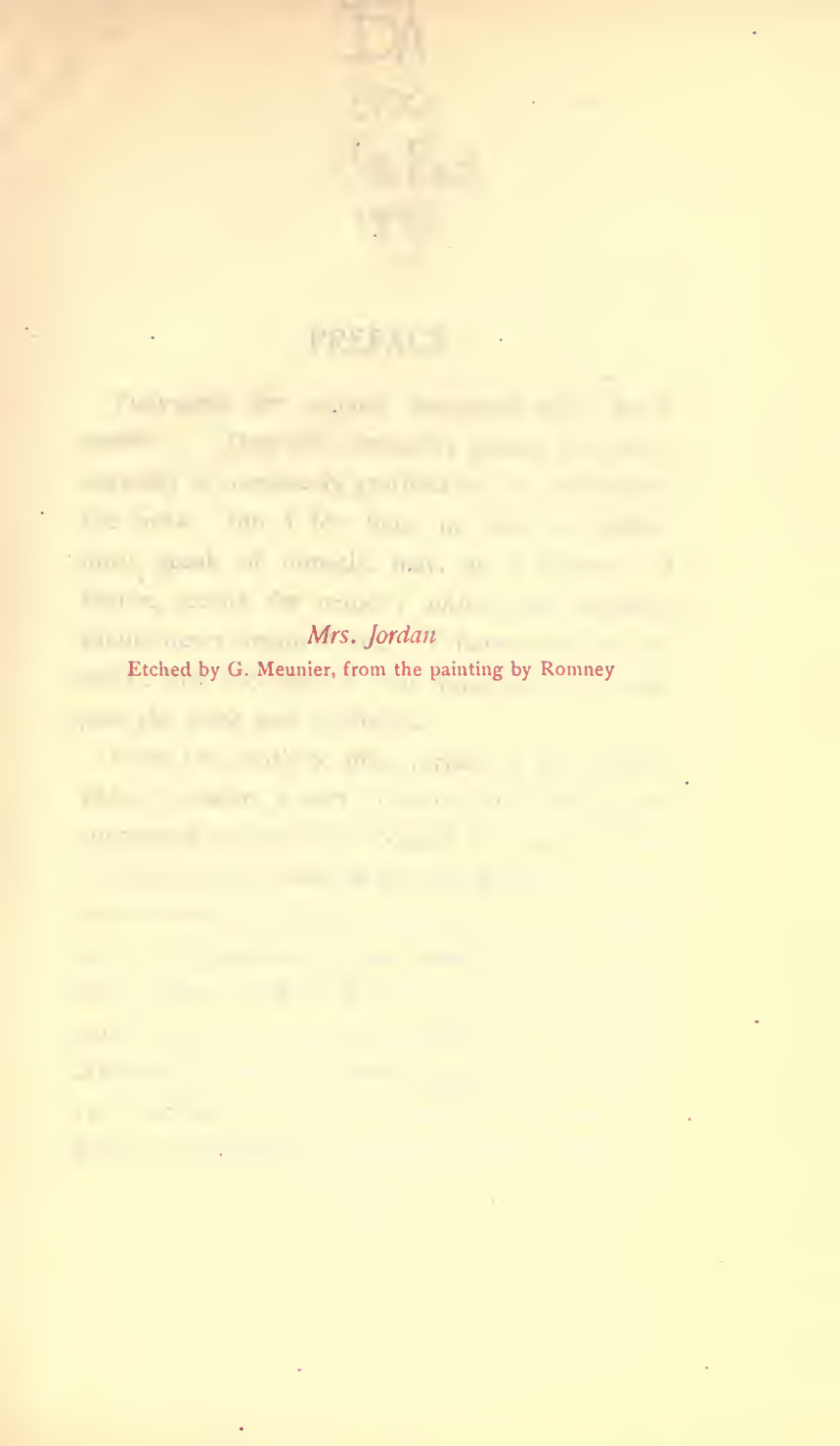
DAYS OF THE DANDIES

MRS. JORDAN

VOLUME I

ATHENÆUM PRESS
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

MRS. JORDAN



Mrs. Jordan

Etched by G. Meunier, from the painting by Romney

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PREFACE

PREFACES are seldom honoured with much attention. They are commonly passed over until curiosity is completely gratified by the contents of the work. But a few lines, in which an author must speak of himself, may, at a moment of leisure, attract the reader's notice; and certainly should never detain it long. I have merely to lay before him the reasons that induced me to compose the work now published.

From the death of Mrs. Jordan up to the year 1824, inclusive, a sort of sullen and interrupted annoyance occasionally recalled the public mind to the disappointment as to Mrs. Jordan's circumstances, and the injury sustained by her creditors and some members of her family. Having had the pleasure of Mrs. Jordan's personal acquaintance for some years, and having paid unwearied attention to her professional exertions from their very commencement in London, it was not, perhaps, too extravagant a thought that I might con-

struct a narrative, not without attraction of two kinds, — that should exhibit a more perfect picture of her than had been given while she occupied the stage, and a truer representation of her private life than other writers had yet been enabled to supply.

As to the stage on which she acted, I had long been conversant with its history, — the inquiries essential to my "Life of Mr. Kemble" had extended beyond himself, and the results were either present to my mind, or were of easy reference in the great mass of theatrical documents around me. As to her last moments, Sir Jonah Barrington, in a work published in 1827, had given such intelligence as he obtained upon the spot, and spoken with reserve on some other points of her history hardly less interesting. Certain private friends, for whom I entertain entire respect, here offered to my use a very interesting portion of Mrs. Jordan's correspondence, throwing a steady light upon the most momentous incidents in her private life. As they were eminently calculated to settle, by their authority, everything that had been questioned, and showed her candour and affection equal at least to the warmest wishes of her friends, I accepted them with pride and pleasure. Permitted to use the very documents themselves,

I have printed them exactly from the originals in her own handwriting. They are unstudied compositions, but they all sprung warm from the heart, and, like her acting, speak its true and impassioned language.

Her acting, indeed, was heart in action, and its pulsations vibrated to the extremities of its theatrical habitation. The fault of the great bulk of her imitators, or contemporaries, was that they never seemed under the actual influence of a passion, but to play from the recollection of it. They described the sensations, — the vice of French tragedy. But this is not the place for disquisition. I therefore refer the reader to my work for every satisfaction of this sort, and conclude with a hope that what I have executed with great zeal and unwearied application may be fortunate enough to amuse his leisure, and place Mrs. Jordan herself, and persons connected with her in life, in the true relative positions, either as to the present age or posterity.

J. B.

60 Warren Street, Fitzroy Square,
November, 1830.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I.

What Is to Be Expected in These Memoirs — Mrs. Jordan's Family Theatrical — Irregularity Commonly Progressive — Mrs. Bland — Her Story — Her Husband — Her Sisters — Ryder First Employs the Talent of Miss Francis — Daly's "Duenna" — Sketch of His Character as a Man and a Manager — Lieut. Charles Doyne Proposes Marriage to Miss Francis — After Some Deliberation His Proposals Are Declined; by Whose Advice in Particular — Ireland a Good School of Acting — Mrs. Abington — Miss Francis as an Actress, and Her Own Notion of Her Powers — Compared with Mrs. Abington 1

CHAPTER II.

Miss Francis Arrives at Leeds in July, 1782 — Her Interview with Tate Wilkinson — His Determination in Her Favour — Her First Appearance Was in Tragedy, in the Part of Calista — Her Reception — "The Greenwood Laddie," and Its Effect — Tate Prophesies That She Will Reach the Summit — Change of Name at York, the Choice of One on That Occasion — Her Aunt, Miss Phillips, Dangerously Ill at York, Makes Her Niece Her Heir — The Application of Mrs. Jordan When a Young Actress — Mr. William Smith Sees Her in the Race Week — She

PAGE

Acted Rutland and the Romp before Him — Interests Himself Warmly about Her — She Acts Arionelli — Mr. Knight — Lady Leake — Swan, the Critic, Teaches Mrs. Jordan Zara — Sheffield, an Alarm — The Duke of Norfolk — Mrs. Jordan's Rivals — Mrs. Smith, and Her March Extraordinary 21

CHAPTER III.

The Year 1783 — Mrs. Jordan's Amazing Popularity in the Character of William, in "Rosina" — Mrs. Brooke the Authoress — Her Husband, Curate to Wilkinson's Father at the Savoy — The King's Chaplain Transported — Garrick's Officious Meddling — Mrs. Baddeley at York — A Lesson to Our Heroine of Negative Instruction — Mrs. Mills, Fawcett's First Wife, an Example of Application to Her — The Art of Mortifying a Scenic Rival — Mrs. Ward, a Great Professor — Mrs. Brown, the Wife of Harlequin Brown, Her "Country Girl" — Miss Wilkinson, afterward Mrs. Mountain — Season of 1785, the Last of Mrs. Jordan as a Member of the York Company — An Instance of Her Caprice — Sees Mrs. Yates as Margaret of Anjou — Dick Yates's Opinion of Mrs. Jordan — Mrs. Siddons Also for Rustication — Mrs. Robinson, the Prophetess — Takes Leave of Yorkshire in the "Poor Soldier," to Proceed to London 43

CHAPTER IV.

The Ascendency of Mrs. Siddons — Struggle of Covent Garden — Mrs. Abington — Mr. Henderson — Miss Farren Compared with the Former Abington — The Hopes Entertained that the "Country Girl" might Revive the Train of Comedy — Within and Without-door Talk of Her — Her First Appearance, on the 18th of October, 1785 — Mrs. Inchbald's Opinion of Her — Fulness and Comic Richness of Tone not Provincialism — Excited

PAGE

Unbounded Laughter — Her Male Figure — Her Letter Scene — About Nineteen, the Age of Miss Peggy — Henderson — Mr. Harris — Mrs. Inchbald — Her Stepson and Mrs. Jordan — Her Viola, in "Twelfth Night," Particularly Examined — Barbarous Curtailments of the Play — Viola Succeeded by Imogen — Mrs. Clive Dies — Compared, in Some Points, with Mrs. Jordan — The "Heiress" Had No Part for Mrs. Jordan — "She Would and She Would Not," Her Hypolita — The "Irish Widow," on Her Benefit Night — Now, Certainly, the Great Support of the Theatre 62

CHAPTER V.

In the Recess Thinks of Her Old Friends in Yorkshire — Difference of Nine Months — Odd Conjuncture — Mrs. Robinson, the Prophetess — Return to Leeds of Mrs. Jordan on the Night of That Lady's Benefit — Acts a Single Night, Now Dividing the House — Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh — The "Belle's Stratagem" — Her Own Epilogue, Its Point — Death of Mrs. Baddeley at This Juncture — Mrs. Jordan Succeeds Mrs. Siddons at Hull and Wakefield — General Burgoyne Translates "Richard Cœur de Lion" for Drury, in 1786, and Mrs. Jordan Accepts Matilda — Death of Princess Amelia Closes the Theatres — H. R. H.'s Clock, by Tompion — The Royal Vault — A Friend of the Author's Passes the Night in It — His Feelings Compared with Juliet's Imagination — Dodsley's "Cleone," and Mrs. Siddons — "Love for Love," and the Miss Prue of Jordan — Congreve and His Preferments — Mrs. Jordan's Roxalana . . . 83

CHAPTER VI.

King's Management — Mrs. Jordan in the Summer of 1787 — Miss Farren, Too, in Yorkshire, Distinguishes Fawcett, Since a Truly Original Actor — Kemble Alters the "Pil-

PAGE

grim" for Mrs. Jordan — Her Juletta — The Character Describes Itself — Beautiful Passages — Madness Exhibited Frequently on the Stage — "The New Peerage" — Old Macklin Remembered When He Had Forgotten Shylock — Interesting Appeal of the Veteran — New Plays by Miss Lee and Captain Jephson — Smith Did Not Act Much with Mrs. Jordan — His Last Benefit — Anecdote of Him when at Eton — His Intimacy with Garrick — His Comedy — Lewis and Bensley Compared with Him as Gentlemen — Abington and Farren — Palmer Returns to His Viola — Mrs. Jordan's Sir Harry Wildair — Theatrical Politics — King's Abdication . . . 104

CHAPTER VII.

Kemble's Management from October, 1788 — The "Panel," for Mrs. Jordan — Beatrice and Her Gown — Her Performance in the "Confederacy" — Her Rosalind Somewhat Divides the Town — Whether the Sprightliness or the Sensibility Should Predominate? — Perhaps the Truer Rosalind, if Shakespeare Were to Decide — Her Nell, in the "Devil to Pay" — Moody, in Jobson — Mrs. Jordan's Opinion of Her Own Art — Her Aspiration after the Fine Lady — Mr. Cumberland Writes for Mrs. Jordan — His Comedy of the "Impostors" a Hurried Composition while Writing "Calvary" — The "Farmhouse," Mrs. Jordan's Country Lass — In the Summer of 1789, Edwin Engaged Her at Richmond — The King's Illness Commenced at Cheltenham when Mrs. Jordan was There — The Question of the Regency — Display of Burke — His Vehement Dexterity — King's Recovery, Sympathy of the Stage — Duel between the Duke of York and Colonel Lennox — The Drawing-room — The Opera House Destroyed by Fire — The French Revolution . . . 132

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII.

The Summer of 1789 — Tate Wilkinson's Benefit at Leeds, Mrs. Jordan Arrives to Act for Him — The Yorkshire Prudery — Mrs. Jordan at Harrowgate on Her Way to Join Mr. Jackson at Edinburgh — Mrs. Siddons at York — Mary, Queen of Scots — Mrs. Fawcett's Compliment to Her — Mrs. Siddons Prefers to Act in London, and Why — Mrs. Jordan and Miss Farren in the Same Places — The Prince of Wales — Miss Catley's Death — The "Two Gentlemen of Verona" Idly Revived — Mrs. Jordan's First Appearance at Drury Lane This Season, so Late as February, 1790 — Mr. Kemble Engages Her Brother, Bland — He Acts Sebastian to Her Viola — Mrs. Behn's "Rover" Altered by Mr. Kemble — Jordan and Woffington in Hellena — Young Bannister — His Character through Life — Morris's "Adventurers" — Mrs. Jordan's Little Pickle — The "Spoil'd Child" Called Her Own, Perhaps Bickerstaff's — The "Intriguing Chambermaid" — "Better Late than Never" — Mrs. Jordan the Heroine — Munden Comes to Town from Chester — Mrs. Jordan Plays Celia in the "Humourous Lieutenant" of Fletcher — Beauties of That Character — Her Alarming Epilogue by Harry Bunbury — Summer of 1791, a Journey to York — Kemble *vice* Jordan . . . 155

CHAPTER IX.

Doctor Woolcot Does Justice to Mrs. Jordan — The Drury Lane Company Remove to the Opera House — The Opening Laugh at Their Difficulties — Additional Prices Carried — Fawcett's Arrival in London with His Wife — Both Engaged by Mr. Harris — Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Kemble — The Press Accuses the Actress of Deserting Her Duty — Proof to the Contrary — The Declared Admiration of a Royal Duke — Mrs. Jordan's Family — Mr. Ford Made Pleas for Attacking Her — She Appeals to

PAGE

the Public by Letter — Finding that She Was, Notwithstanding, Still Persecuted, She Addresses the Audience in Person, and Remains Absolute Mistress of the Field — "Cymon" Revived with Great Splendour — The Beauty of the Cast — Kelly's Hospitality and His Guests — The "Village Coquette," for Mrs. Jordan's Night — Richardson's "Fugitive" Acted by Her — Miss Herbert, in That Comedy, Miss Farren — Mrs. Sheridan Dies, Commemorated by Genius — Her Epitaph — Sir Joshua Reynolds, What He Thought and Said of Mrs. Jordan — Regret That She Never Sat to Him — Brings Out a Play Called "Anna," against the Opinion of Kemble — Fate of Her Novelty — Of Mrs. Siddons's — Of Miss Farren's — Mrs. Jordan in Lady Restless — Cumberland's "Armourer" 188

CHAPTER X.

History of Drury Lane Theatres — Their Origin in the Cockpit, a Little Before the Retirement of Shakespeare — Destroyed by a Mob in 1617 — The Phœnix Built in the Same Spot — Its Preservation in the Great Rebellion — Rhodes, the Bookseller, and His Two Apprentices, Betterton and Kynaston — Obtains a License First for the Phœnix, and Then Joins D'Avenant in Lincoln's Inn Fields — A New Theatre Erected by Killigrew in Drury Lane — Opened in 1662; Burnt Nine Years Afterward — A Church Brief Granted on This Calamity — Sir Christopher Wren Builds Once More upon the Old Spot — The Advantages of His Plan Displayed by Colley Cibber — Apology for Its Plainness in a Prologue and Epilogue by the Great Dryden, Spoken at Its Opening in 1674 — Union of the Two Companies in Drury Lane Theatre — Christopher Rich, Patentee — Silenced by the Chamberlain — Patents Dormant — Sir Richard Steele's License to Himself, Wilks, Booth, and Cibber — Mr. Highmore

PAGE

— Mr. Fleetwood — The Illustrious Garrick Becomes Purchaser with Mr. Lacy — Twenty Years' Splendour of Old Drury — On the Great Actor's Retirement, Sheridan Succeeds Him — At Length the House is Taken Down — Author's Regard for It, and Personal Acquaintance with Its Merits and Its Defects — Presages on Its Fall . 220

CHAPTER XI.

The Grand National Theatre — Description of It — Opening with Sacred Music — First Play Acted on the 21st of April — Innovations of Mr. Kemble in "Macbeth" — The Bell — The Dagger — The Ghost of Banquo — Musical Witches — Charles Kemble — Securities from Fire — Reservoir — Iron Curtain — Mere Tricks — The Vanity of Speculative Science — Mrs. Jordan not Employed — Kemble — Miss Farren Does the Honours — Fitzpatrick — G. Colman — Mr. Cumberland's Comedy of the "Jew" — The Gratitude of Israel — Kemble's "Lodoiska" — Three Farces Three Days Together — Mrs. Jordan Acts for the Widows and Orphans Made on the 1st of June — Three Farces Again, and for Four Days — Harris *versus* Kemble — In the Summer, John Bannister at Liverpool — Winter of 1794–95 — Mrs. Davenport — A Shilling Gallery Put Up — "Emilia Galotti" at Drury — "Nobody" — Mrs. Jordan's Fright — The "Rage" — The "Wedding Day" of Mrs. Inchbald — Mrs. Jordan's Portrait Seen Again by the Author, Forty Years after It Was Painted — Her Helena — "Measure for Measure" — Miss Mellon — Mrs. Coutts — The Duchess — Miss Arne — "Alexander the Great," a Ballet 235

CHAPTER XII.

The Death of Parsons — His Peculiar Merits — Holland and Powell — Spouting Clubs — Political Orators — Parsons

PAGE

and the Lion — The "Wheel of Fortune" — Madame d'Arblay — Jerningham's "Welsh Heiress," Mrs. Jordan in Plinlimmon — Drury Attacking Its Own Splendours — Chaos Umpire in the Concern — "Seven Ages" for Mrs. Siddons — "First Love," by Cumberland; Sabina Rosny, Mrs. Jordan — Her Enchanting Effect — Some Pleasing Recollections — Cumberland's Opinion of Her — Nature to Be Upheld by Mrs. Jordan — Winter of 1795–96 — The "Dependent" — The "Rival Queens" — Kemble in Alexander — Mrs. Jordan Confined — Miss Decamp in Columbine — Mrs. Jordan in Fidelia, Her Power upon Mr. Kemble — His Sense of Her Acting in the "Plain Dealer" — Gives It to the Author in the Words of Sterne — The "Iron Chest," and Its Failure — Sheridan Wished Mrs. Jordan in That Play — "Vortigern" Has That Advantage; She Acts Flavia — Ireland — Chatterton — Queen Elizabeth, Her Little Attention to Players — Mrs. Jordan Speaks Merry's Epilogue — Poor Benson's Death 263

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Colman and the Reopening of His "Iron Chest" — Season of 1796–97 — The Losses of Drury; Parsons, Dodd — The Latter Excellent in Old Winterton — Contrasted with Fawcett — Wroughton Appointed Stage-manager — Mrs. Jordan and Her Salary — Ballet — Miss Parissot and the "Triumph of Love" — Madame Hilligsberg, an Atalanta in Running — Dowton Recommended by Cumberland — An Admirer Before of Mr. Henderson — Garrick's Prejudice — Deficiencies of the Company — Revivals — Jephson's "Conspiracy" — The Force of Ridicule — Miss Farren Contumacious — New Comedy Postponed — Miss Farren's Return and Triumph — Play Destroyed — The "Shipwreck" — The Operatic "Honeymoon" — "Friend in Need" — New Imogen — Miss

PAGE

Farren's Retirement to a Coronet — Mrs. Pope's Death and Character — The Author Becomes Acquainted with Mrs. Jordan — In the Distress of Drury Lane House, Reynolds Writes for Mrs. Jordan — Cumberland's Behaviour at the Exhibition of the "Will" — Mrs. Jordan's Albina, and Her Seven Ages of Woman — "Dido," and "My Night Gown and Slippers" — Prince Hoare at Covent Garden — Mrs. Jordan a Full Contrast to the Selfish of Her Profession 283

CHAPTER XIV.

Death of Charles Macklin — His Works Collected by Murphy — Mrs. Jordan's Kind Subscription — "The Jew That Shakespeare Drew" — Interpreted by Sir Joseph Mawbey — Dryden's "Œdipus" — Lines in, Applied to Macklin — Their Beauty — Lord Mansfield's Regard for Macklin — Note — His Lordship's Opinion on the French Revolution — The "Heir at Law" — "Filthy Dowlas" — "Italian Monk," at the Summer Theatre — Mrs. Jordan visits Richmond and Margate — Sees Mrs. Abington in Beatrice — Her Excellence in the Character — Miss Betterton, Since Mrs. Glover — The Chasm at Drury — How Miss Farren Was to Be Replaced — Miss Humphreys in Lady Emily — Miss Biggs in the "Irish Widow" — Miss Decamp a Lover in the "Chimney Corner" — Mrs. Jordan in Sir Edward Bloomley — Defects of "Cheap Living" — Jordan Rather Restive — Again Quite the Duchess — Her Happy Illustration of That Title — Mrs. Crawford's Idle Return — Lord Duncan's Victory — Mrs. Jordan Acts for the Sufferers — Something Fine — Kemble Acts Hotspur — John Palmer's Death in the Summer — Effects of It in the Theatre 310

MRS. JORDAN

CHAPTER I.

What Is to Be Expected in These Memoirs — Mrs. Jordan's Family Theatrical — Irregularity Commonly Progressive — Mrs. Bland — Her Story — Her Husband — Her Sisters — Ryder First Employs the Talent of Miss Francis — Daly's "Duenna" — Sketch of His Character as a Man and a Manager — Lieut. Charles Doyne Proposes Marriage to Miss Francis — After Some Deliberation His Proposals Are Declined; by Whose Advice in Particular — Ireland a Good School of Acting — Mrs. Abington — Miss Francis as an Actress, and Her Own Notion of Her Powers — Compared with Mrs. Abington.

THE lady of whom I have undertaken the biography unquestionably demands such a tribute from the country which she adorned with her talents; and from me particularly, who discharge but a debt to the muse of Comedy, after having celebrated the two principal favourites of her serious sister.

I assure the reader that this allusion to any pre-

vious works of mine arises from no feeling of vanity; but that he may, from them at least, infer the temper with which the present work will be written, and rely upon every becoming delicacy in treating the subject. I see the delightful and much-lamented mother affectionately honoured in her children; and, not in the least depending upon her merits, I know that they will justify even higher favour (if higher can be shown) by progressive merits of their own. This declaration is equally removed, I trust, from servility and rudeness; it is the necessary prelude to what must be an impartial narrative, executed in the tone of sincere, yet gentlemanly, freedom.

But there would be little interest in such a composition, if the variety of its incidents were to be coloured by any remarkable elevation of its subject; it is the diversity of her lot that must render the "Life of Mrs. Jordan" valuable to the moralist, and of conspicuous importance to the public in general. The whole of it justifies the following brief, but unequal, summary. She began life in the midst of difficulty and ambiguity; by her own genius attained all the honours of her profession, and the envy, which, like the shadow, threw them fuller upon the eye. She lived for a series

of years in the bosom of a beloved family, with every accompaniment of splendour; and expired in a foreign land, at a distance from all that she loved, and overwhelmed by disasters, to which she could see no termination but the grave.

The mother of Mrs. Jordan was one of three sisters of a Welsh family of the name of Phillips. Their father I believe to have been in orders, but there is little promotion among the Welsh clergy; the scanty provision he could make for his family induced his three daughters to go upon the stage; and we know from unquestionable authority, that they were all respectable in the profession.

Miss Grace Phillips yielded to the addresses of a Mr. Bland, and she went to Ireland along with him, where they were married by a Catholic priest. I presume she continued her profession without interruption; for her husband was a minor, and his father being little disposed to sanction his youthful ardour, and, as a civilian, entirely master of his ground, procured the marriage to be annulled, as one contracted in nonage, and void, from the want of parental consent.

I venture, in opposition to the usual statements, to throw the birth of Mrs. Jordan as far back as the year 1762, because I well remember hearing

her age stated to have been sixteen in the year 1778, when an old military friend, then on the recruiting service at Cork, saw her there, in the company of which Daly was the manager, who had brought her out the year before. In this unfortunate condition of her parents, Mrs. Jordan was born in the neighbourhood of Waterford, about the year 1762, and was christened, I suppose, Dorothy, though, somewhat romantically, she signed herself, commonly, Dora, when she wrote more than the initial D. of the name.

Irregularity of any kind is commonly progressive, and seldom prosperous. The misfortunes of Mrs. Jordan may be said to have commenced at her very birth, and the hue then impressed upon her fate continued to tinge it to its close; there was an ambiguity in her situation, always productive of annoyance; and the cultivation and the practice of many virtues were not always thought to balance the admitted dispensation with some of the forms of life.

To the relations of her husband Mrs. Bland generally seemed to consider herself under a sort of vassalage. She probably expected that her children might receive benefit by her attention to their feelings; and the stage-name borne by her

daughter was therefore Francis, except when some irritation, usually transient, made her try at least to mortify them by the use of that of Bland.

It is obvious, from the accounts of Wilkinson and Hitchcock, that the three sisters, whom I have already alluded to, were well educated and accomplished women; and that they were persons of "gentle blood" may reasonably be supposed an advantage in theatrical life. To the higher orders it is a favourite apology, I have observed, that the players whom they patronise are "persons of a respectable family," and pleasure itself must be regulated by pride.

The studies of the stage, it may here be observed, constitute a better education than is commonly derived from the schools. What other ladies have under their command, constantly encamped, such "an army of good words" as our actresses? Who, besides them, are so stored with every variety of neat and polished thought? Who else can have equal self-possession, equal address; and, above all, who ever approach them in distinct articulation, in voluble or impressive delivery? So great are these advantages, that they have kept very powerful actresses in high reputation for their wit, who could scarcely read their parts, and never

acquired the orthography in which they were all of them printed.

We shall not therefore be surprised that, without the possibility of her receiving an expensive education, which her embarrassed parents could not afford, Mrs. Jordan acquired, almost domestically, a very correct diction in her native language, and the power of composing agreeably, in either prose or verse, with little premeditation. When at length it was determined that she also, with the family bias, should appear upon the stage, Mr. Ryder entrusted to her the slight part of Phebe in "As You Like It;" quite unconscious of the real union that would one day take place between her representative and the poet's Rosalind:

> "I'll marry you, if ever I marry woman;
> And I'll be married to-morrow."
>
> — *As You Like It.*

The popularity of Mr. Ryder, as a manager and actor in Dublin, was great and well merited. As a gentleman he was in truth highly cultivated, and his daughter studied the classics, and translated elegantly from the Latin poets. Some of her writings I very recently perused with pleasure. Ryder's company was at the time strong, and he

could therefore allot no important, perhaps adequate, business to our young aspirant. His rival Daly had more in his power, or promised more; and the celebrated opera of the "Duenna" being pirated, and called the "Governess," with the characters reversed, Miss Francis assumed the male attire in the character of Lopez. She also acted the Romp in the farce so called, and Tomboy sat better upon her than Lopez; and the Master of Horse in Ireland, Captain Jephson's tragedy of the "Count of Narbonne" being acted at both theatres, Daly gave Miss Francis the interesting part of Adelaide, and she became attractive as an actress in her sixteenth year.

Daly now took her with him to Cork, and here we have some accurate recollections of her by the friend to whom I before alluded, the publication of whose memoirs during the progress of the present work gives me the opportunity of inserting in her life a sketch so lively and authentic. See Mr. P. L. Gordon's "Personal Memoirs," vol. i. p. 341.

"She had met with great applause, especially in the farce of the 'Romp,' and Heaphy, the manager of the Cork theatre, engaged her at twenty shillings per week, along with her father, who was employed as a scene-shifter. The young lady was

at this time in her seventeenth year, and though not a regular beauty, she was universally admired, and proved a great attraction. On this account the manager gave her a benefit, but for want of patronage it proved a complete failure, the expenses of the house being more than her receipts. A party of young men, at the head of which was a Mr. Smith, a banker's clerk, were desirous that their favourite should have another benefit, and they called lustily for Heaphy to come on the stage, but he would not appear. The young Pats were, however, determined to carry their point, and being joined by the pit, they proceeded to tear up the benches, and to attack the orchestra, who, to drown the clamour, had begun fiddling. This was alarming, and the acting manager, O'Keefe, Heaphy's son-in-law, at length judged it prudent to make his appearance, when a spokesman delivered, in an appropriate harangue, the desire of the audience that Miss Phillips should have a free benefit. O'Keefe remonstrated, stating that the season had been unprofitable to the manager; but this excuse was not admitted, and he was compelled to yield to the wishes of the public — *alias* a score of wild bucks, of which I made one.

"The benefit was fixed for an early evening and

our *débutante* had an audience that produced above forty pounds; an immense sum in her eyes, we may easily suppose, as it was probably the first money she ever had. Her popularity increased before the season closed. Henderson and I met at a supper-party, to which Miss Phillips had also been invited. This celebrated actor complimented her in the most flattering manner on her talents, advising her to study her profession, and to assume a higher walk in comedy than playing Romps; and success, he said, would be certain. On her return to Dublin, her salary was raised to three guineas a week." (From Pryse Gordon's "Personal Memoirs," vol. i. p. 341.)

Mrs. Daly, the once celebrated Miss Barsanti, it should here be observed, was extremely tenacious as to the characters to which she had the prescriptive right of excellence, as well as situation. She might be the more tenacious, as her husband's attentions were not confined by his vow, and his own admiration always accompanied, if it did not precede, that of the public for every lady of merit in his company.

Richard Daly, Esq., patentee of the Dublin Theatre, was born in the County Galway, and educated at Trinity College; as a preparation for

the course he intended to run through life, he had fought sixteen duels in two years, three with the small-sword, and thirteen with pistols; and he, I suppose, imagined, like Macbeth, with equal confidence and more truth, that he bore a "charmed life;" for he had gone through the said sixteen trials of his nerve without a single wound or scratch of much consequence. He therefore used to provoke such meetings on any usual and even uncertain grounds, and entered the field in pea-green, embroidered and ruffled and curled, as if he had been to hold up a very different ball, and gallantly presented his full front, conspicuously finished with an elegant brooch, quite regardless how soon the labours of the toilet "might soil their honours in the dust." Daly, in person, was remarkably handsome, and his features would have been agreeable but for an inveterate and most distressing squint, the consciousness of which might keep his courage eternally upon the lookout for provocation; and not seldom, from surprise alone, afford him an opportunity for this his favourite diversion. Like Wilkes, he must have been a very unwelcome adversary to meet with the sword, because the eye told the opposite party nothing of his intentions. Mr. Daly's gallantry was equal

at least to his courage, and the latter was often necessary to defend him in the unbridled indulgence that through life he permitted to the former. He was said to be the general lover in his theatrical company; and, I presume, the resistance of the fair to a manager may be somewhat modified by the danger of offending one who has the power to appoint them to parts, either striking or otherwise, and who must not be irritated, if he cannot be obliged. It has been said, too, that any of his subjects risked a great deal by an escape from either his love or his tyranny; for he would put his bond in force upon the refractory, and condemn to a hopeless imprisonment those who, from virtue or disgust, had determined to disappoint him.

It has been asserted that he teased Miss Francis with his addresses, and that, upon her resistance and desertion of his theatre, he actually sued for the penalty on her article, and that it was paid for her by the benevolence of a stranger. Such a conduct is in violent opposition to another report, that he had been a favoured lover of the young lady. Upon the subject of her early admirers, there is one story which exists upon an authority above dispute, namely, that of the per-

sonal friend of the lover. This, therefore, I shall here introduce, and in the words of the writer, Sir Jonah Barrington.

"The company then proceeded to perform in the provinces, and at Waterford occurred the first grave incident in the life of Mrs. Jordan. Lieut. Charles Doyne, of the Third Regiment of heavy horse (Greens), was then quartered in that city; and, struck with the naïveté and almost irresistible attractions of the young performer, his heart yielded, and he became seriously and honourably attached to her. Lieutenant Doyne was not handsome, but he was a gentleman and a worthy man, and had been my friend and companion some years at the university. I knew him intimately, and he entrusted me with his passion. Miss Francis's mother was then alive, and sedulously attended her. Full of ardour and thoughtlessness myself, I advised him, if he could win the young lady, to marry her, adding, that, no doubt, fortune must smile on so disinterested a union. Her mother, however, was of a different opinion; and as she had no fortune but her talent, the exercise of which was to be relinquished with the name of Francis, it became a matter of serious consideration from what source they were to draw

their support, with the probability, too, of a family. His commission was altogether inadequate, and his private fortune very small. This obstacle, in short, was insurmountable. Mrs. Francis, anticipating the future celebrity of her child, and unwilling to extinguish in obscurity all chance of fame and fortune by means of the profession she had adopted, worked upon her daughter to decline the proposal. The treaty, accordingly, ended, and Lieutenant Doyne appeared to me for a little time almost inconsolable. Miss Francis, accompanied by her mother, soon after went over to England, and for nearly twenty years I never saw that unrivalled performer.

"Mr. Owenson, the father of Lady Morgan, took a warm interest in the welfare of Miss Francis, and was the principal adviser of her mother in rejecting Mr. Doyne's addresses." He was an actor who excelled in the performance of Irish characters, discriminated from Johnstone by a very inferior power as a singer, and never elevating them to so gentlemanly a rank as they enjoyed in the hands of that masterly performer.

Among the obvious reasons which appear to have broken off the union we are speaking of, those that respect the advantage of the whole

family were probably least urged, and yet most felt. They had got what their own knowledge of acting told them was a treasure if it could be applied. An ordinary marriage, and a consequent retirement from the stage, was burying it from all use, either to herself or others. Besides this, Mrs. Bland had herself seen that passion, though strong enough to brave the present for its object, shrinks at the weary test of the future. A sense of disparity, which the relations feel from the first, is felt at length by the husband himself. Every succeeding year weakens the attachment, and strengthens the objections to it. The parties are separated, and the wife deserted is thrown upon a provision, with pain either demanded or satisfied; while the talent, kindled in youth, and then fanned into independence by the public breath, is to be revived in maturity from a long slumber, and perhaps never to regain the blaze at which it was quenched, much less the volume of splendour which its uninterrupted progress might have reached.

There were other reasons which might weigh with Miss Francis, and which will suggest themselves to the mind of every reader: Lieutenant Doyne had no personal advantages; his rank in

the army was inconsiderable; and his private fortune slender, which, translated from the idiom of the sister island, is, perhaps, little or nothing. How far she had entangled herself with Daly, and by what ill-considered engagements he might pretend to detain her, are now of little moment, though at the time decisive of her fate. She directed her course to England. But before we show our fair wanderer upon her new stage, it may be proper to inquire what facilities the kingdom she quitted afforded for the attainment of histrionic excellence.

Ireland, as a school for a young actress, had been long rendered of first-rate importance by the brilliant career of Mrs. Abington, who acted at both the Dublin theatres, and unquestionably possessed very peculiar and hitherto unapproached talent. She, I think, took more entire possession of the stage than any actress I have seen; there was, however, no assumption in her dignity; she was a lawful and graceful sovereign, who exerted her full power, and enjoyed her established prerogatives. The ladies of her day wore the hoop and its concomitant train. The *Spectator's* exercise of the fan was really no play of fancy. Shall I say that I have never seen it in a hand so dex-

terous as that of Mrs. Abington? She was a woman of great application; to speak as she did required more thought than usually attends female study. Far the greater part of the sex rely upon an intuition which seldom misleads them; such discernment as it gives becomes habitual and is commonly sufficient, or sufficient for common purposes. But commonplace was not the station of Abington. She was always beyond the surface, untwisted all the chains which bind ideas together, and seized upon the exact cadence and emphasis by which the point of the dialogue is enforced. Her voice was of a high pitch, and not very powerful. Her management of it alone made it an organ; yet this was so perfect that we sometimes converted the mere effect into a cause, and supposed it was the sharpness of the tone that had conveyed the sting. Yet, her figure considered, her voice rather sounded inadequate; its articulation, however, gave both strength and smartness to it, though it could not give sweetness. You heard her well, and without difficulty; and it is the first duty of a public speaker to be audible and intelligible. Her deportment is not so easily described; more womanly than Farren, fuller, yet not heavy, like Younge, and far beyond even the

conception of modern fine ladies, Mrs. Abington remains in memory as a thing for chance to restore to us, rather than design, and revive our polite comedy at the same time.

Miss Francis, with her natural good sense, could not fail to discover that she had undertaken no slight enterprise. The speaking voice, it is true, soon makes its way, and the possessor of nature's music perceives the spell that it has breathed around. To be listened to without a sign of weariness — to dress by a few words of slight importance every countenance in smiles — to see even habitual cunning desert the worldly, and gravity the thoughtful — such are the tributes uniformly paid to a melodious utterance. The young actress would be aware also of the perfect symmetry of her form, and though below the majestic and above the common, might consider herself seated as it were about the centre of humanity, and reaching far indeed into the rival realms of feeling and humour.

Miss Francis never effused herself much in talk; she had no ambition after the voluble and the witty. I know not that she would have been much distinguished had chance diverted her from the stage; yet I think I know that she could not

have been happy without the exercise of her theatric talent, and that she was seeking the only medium that could display the unbounded humour, the whim, the sportiveness of her own nature on the one hand, or the persuasive reason and unaffected sensibility that gave a sterling value to the lighter parts of her composition on the other.

She never gave herself the credit of much study, and the truth was that, except as to mere words, her studies lay little in books. With her eye and ear she would become insensibly learned. All the peculiarities of action and the whole gamut of tone were speedily acquired; the general notion of a character once settled, she called upon nature, within her own bosom, to fill up the outline, and the mighty parent stored it with richer materials than ever fancy could devise, except it was the fancy that embodied Falstaff, a part so made out that every speech is a lesson as to the mode of its delivery, and to understand whose language thoroughly is to be himself.

I have named these two great women together, though they had not the slightest resemblance even when viewed in the same characters. When Mrs. Abington changed her higher range of characters for the cast of Mrs. Jordan in comedy, she

always reminded you of the sphere she dropped from; there was no little high life below stairs. Mrs. Jordan was the genuine thing itself, and that she imitated at all never obtruded itself for a moment upon her audience. There was a heartiness in her enjoyment, a sincerity in her laugh, that sunk the actress in the woman; she seemed only to exhibit herself and her own wild fancies, and utter the impromptus of the moment.

The reader will perhaps ask here whether this was at all borne out by the fact, and whether Mrs. Jordan's natural character any way resembled this stage impression of her? The answer, as far as I had means to estimate her, is, not in the least. She needed to touch the boards of the theatre to draw from her what delighted equally all ranks and ages of either sex, about whose preëminence there never was the slightest dispute; and if this charm of hers yielded to tragedy the first place, it was only because the miseries of life take deeper hold of the mind than its enjoyments, and history, epic poetry, tragedy, the romance of real life, and romance itself, confirm us in our gloomy preference. We neglect our best teacher, Gratiano, and say, like his companions in the play, that he speaks "an infinite deal of nothing." It is much

easier to say this than to answer the following queries :

> " Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
> Sit like his grandsire, cut in alabaster?
> Sleep when he wakes — and creep into the jaundice
> By being peevish? — Let me play the fool; —
> With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come;
> And let my liver rather heat with wine
> Than my heart cool with mortifying groans."

At all events, such a man looks only at what is real in misfortune ; his temper keeps him from all anticipation before it arrives, and exaggeration after ; he removes melancholy from his mind as speedily as he can, and places it, for ever, beyond the reach of a darker but kindred spirit, — misanthropy.

CHAPTER II.

Miss Francis Arrives at Leeds in July, 1782 — Her Interview with Tate Wilkinson — His Determination in Her Favour — Her First Appearance Was in Tragedy, in the Part of Calista — Her Reception — "The Greenwood Laddie," and Its Effect — Tate Prophesies That She Will Reach the Summit — Change of Name at York, the Choice of One on That Occasion — Her Aunt, Miss Phillips, Dangerously Ill at York, Makes Her Niece Her Heir — The Application of Mrs. Jordan When a Young Actress — Mr. William Smith Sees Her in the Race Week — She Acted Rutland and the Romp before Him — Interests Himself Warmly about Her — She Acts Arionelli — Mr. Knight — Lady Leake — Swan, the Critic, Teaches Mrs. Jordan Zara — Sheffield, an Alarm — The Duke of Norfolk — Mrs. Jordan's Rivals — Mrs. Smith, and Her March Extraordinary.

IT was early in the month of July, 1782, that Tate Wilkinson, manager of the York company, then at Leeds, was informed that Miss Francis, with her mother, brother, and sister, were arrived, and requested to see him at his earliest convenience. That worthy man immediately visited them at their inn, and found, in Mrs. Bland, the mother, his own Desde-

mona at Dublin, in the year 1758, when he acted Othello, and indeed almost everything. She was at that time Miss Grace Phillips.

The party was fatigued with the journey, and the first glance of the manager sufficed to acquaint him with their indifferent circumstances. The mother had an introduction which, like that of brother soldiers, is always strong: she had served with Mr. Wilkinson in the campaigns of their youth; and it was not unlikely that the young lady inherited some theatrical talent, as the quality of the soil she sprang from. However, he asked her laconically whether her line was tragedy, comedy, or opera? To which, in one word, she answered, "All."

When telling her story afterward, she always said, at this point of it: "Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished!" Mrs. Bland now found herself at full liberty to dilate upon her daughter's merits; and, fond as she always was of her, it is possible that even a mother's fondness did not overrate them. Upon the virtues of her heart, she was copious with equal reason — she was a girl of nineteen, and the whole family depended upon her.

The most benevolent man is often obliged to

shape his kindness by his interest. Before Mr. Wilkinson opened a negotiation, it became necessary for him to reflect a little; and he withdrew accordingly to another room for a few minutes to decide whether he should give the common negative, that his company was too full at present, or enter upon the business with that friendly concession that left the terms of the engagement alone to be adjusted. It is not too much praise here to say that his heart determined him. On his reëntering the room, which he soon did, his smile told the adventurers they were likely to gain some provision, however trifling, and a friend who was to be secured by zeal and attention to the concern in which he was engaged. But the heroine, at that time, exhibited not a vestige of her comic powers either in feature or manner. On the contrary, like the player in "Hamlet," she had, with a slight parody, —

> "Tears in her eyes, dejection in her aspect,
> A broken voice, and her whole function suited
> With forms to her distress."

When Wilkinson besought her to favour him with the usual "taste of her quality," a passionate speech, the languor that sat upon her frame pro-

nounced her just then to be incapable of any assumed passion. She wished to merit an engagement by a fair trial on the boards, and the manager assented to this, the fairest of all propositions. Their considerate friend now ordered a bottle of Madeira to be brought in, and the friendly charm soon revived the spirits of the travellers, who chatted gaily upon the subject of the Irish stage, and the general news of that kingdom, till at length the manager espied a favourable opportunity of repeating his request for the speech, which was to decide in some degree his opinion of her value; and the interesting woman spoke for him a few lines of Calista, which they settled she was to act on the Thursday following, with Lucy, in the "Virgin Unmasked." The exquisite and plaintive melody of her voice, the distinctness of her articulation, the truth and nature that looked through her, affected the experienced actor deeply; his internal delight could only be balanced by his hopes, and he poured out his praise and his congratulation in no measured language. As is usual on such occasions, the modest actress replied that "if she could but please her manager she should be satisfied; and that, should she achieve the public favour, he should ever find her grateful

for the aid he had afforded to her necessity." If the heart speaks too much on these occasions, it is cruel to arrest its triumph by a suspicion dishonourable to our nature; Tate acknowledged a sudden "impulse of regard," and the parties separated with mutual good wishes, and expressions of entire confidence in the result.

It was on the 11th of July, 1782, that, under the name of Francis (for her mother desired the manager to cancel that of Bland, inserted in the playbills), she was put up, for the first time, at Leeds, in the character of Calista; but, greatly to the manager's surprise, Mrs. Bland had desired he would announce that, after the play, Miss Francis would sing the song of the "Greenwood Laddie." As we have said, Wilkinson had detected no symptoms of comedy in the heroine of the evening; but he did them the credit to believe that they knew well what they were doing, and so merely threw out an incantation which had previously been found irresistible.

The manager of a country circuit, like that of York, is a person of no little importance; and, if he be a man accomplished like Tate Wilkinson, is likely to stand well with all the principal gentry in the great towns which he visits. Literature

naturally allies itself to the stage, and what lover of letters would be insensible to the social claims of one who had not only himself represented the whole range of dramatic character, but, as a mimic, was also the representative of theatric life; who could bring before them Garrick and Foote, and even Woffington and Pritchard, and a long *et cetera* of both sexes; and was of all humours that had shown themselves humours for near half a century? It is not to be doubted that, on the present occasion, Tate would fairly relate to the patrons of the playhouse all that he had himself felt of the charm about the young actress; and that for the double object of affording her suitable minds to impress, and of deriving himself the means of holding together a numerous company, popular only by the quality and variety of its attractions. Her rehearsals had elevated his hopes to the tone of prophecy, and he ventured to say that Miss Francis would be at the very head of the profession. Yet Cibber, it is probable, lingered about his heart, as she had done about his master, Garrick's; and of comedy, for the present, there was no question.

She was heard through the play with the greatest attention and sympathy, and the manager

began to tremble at the absurdity, as he reasonably thought it, of Calista arising from the dead, and rushing before an audience in their tears, to sing a ballad in the pastoral style, which nobody called for or cared about. But on she jumped, with her elastic spring, and a smile that Nature's own cunning hand had moulded, in a frock and a little mob-cap, and her curls, as she wore them all her life; and she sang her ballad so enchantingly as to fascinate her hearers, and convince the manager that every charm had not been exhausted by past times, nor all of them numbered, for the volunteer unaccompanied ballad of Mrs. Jordan was peculiar to her, and charmed only by her voice and manner. Leeds, though a manufacturing town, and strongly addicted to the interests of trade, was, at the call of the charmer, induced to crowd her benefit on the 5th of August; and, that being over, the troop were seen in full march for York, where Wilkinson had ordered his new acquisition to be announced as Calista, by the name of Francis.

But the only female name unsusceptible of change is the baptismal. The surname is one above confinement, and variable with the condition of the bearer. Upon the arrival of the ladies

at York, the manager received a note from Mrs. Bland, stating that, for very particular reasons, which would be explained, the name of Francis must be changed, and some other adopted. Wilkinson naturally proposed Bland, to which she had a natural title, but the actress now wrote to him "that his wish, as to the insertion of Bland, could not be complied with, as that name in the prints might probably much injure her in the opinion of her father's relations." I choose to cite, on this occasion, the manager's own words, because I believe them to be sincere, and find them marked with a propriety that will not escape admiration. "So," says he, "on our meeting, and the matter being explained, there appeared obvious and pressing reasons for a change of name, and that of Mrs. Jordan was adopted." What Wilkinson deliberately writes may be depended on. In conversation, he used to claim the honour of having been her godfather on this occasion, and, as the son of a clergyman, indulged himself with an allusion to the "Jordan," which she had luckily passed, whatever badge of her former slavery she might still carry about her; and she gratefully bore the name on this pious recommendation. As to the Mrs. now assumed, it was a shield that protected

the wearer from all frivolous suitors; and here I shall drop the subject, though her manager lingers about it. The Jordan is a name sufficiently devoted to fame; and though, at one time, in York itself, the ford was used instead of the river, yet her fame, as an actress, may flow on by that appellation alone, as long as her existence is remembered.

But the reader must be made acquainted with the reason which produced this new decision as to name, on the arrival at York, which had, indeed, before been attended with some difficulty. The fact was, that her aunt, Miss Phillips, who had also been an actress in the York company, and was now lying dangerously ill, had that last infirmity of the Welsh mind, a high value for the families to which she claimed alliance. She had earnestly entreated to see her sister, Mrs. Bland, and to welcome her niece, whom she pronounced to be already an honour to the stock from which she derived alike her theatrical and lineal honours; and as this near relation was at the point of death, and destined a very enviable wardrobe as a legacy to her beloved niece, upon the payment of a slight equity of redemption, both prudence and affection concurred in allowing the last wish of an aunt

who felt her interest so strongly. Miss Phillips is said to have considered herself the greatest actress that had ever appeared, and she had the opinion to herself. Her niece has been generally considered unrivalled in her particular walk, but it was a pretension which I believe she never uttered, if she for a moment believed it to be just. Within a week after this transaction the aunt died, and Mrs. Jordan pursued her profession, though she did not exactly tread in her steps. Her aunt had been an indolent actress; our heroine, on the contrary, was then so indefatigable in her application that she studied a new character and played it between day and day. And when we consider that stage business in the provincial towns is commonly thus hurried, and yet that the seeds are there sown whose maturity is so rich a feast to us in London, we may well admit that no profession is more laborious, that in none are brighter powers displayed, and that memory is there cultivated to an extent of copiousness and accuracy of which no equal examples can be found. To all these qualities must be added the tact by which character is discerned, and embodied and preserved in perfect consistency with the poet's outline, filled up by the expression,

the gesture, the eye, the gait, to which the actor accommodates unfailingly his mental and personal habits during the exhibition. What is technically called the business of a part, may be learned from some member of the company who has seen it played. But still much must be left to the individual who assumes the character; and they who have attended, with any candour, performances out of the metropolis, must, on the whole, be astonished at their relative perfection.

The race week at York brings many visitors to the theatre who cannot be expected there on less excitement. Among such amateurs of the turf and the boards was to be numbered Mr. William Smith, the admired actor of Drury Lane Theatre. Mrs. Jordan had the pleasure of acting Rutland before that gentleman, and she followed her serious interest by the performance of Priscilla Tomboy in the "Romp," which she had acted in Dublin the year before, and in which she continued to delight as long as figure permitted her to retain the character. Smith was a warm-hearted and gentlemanly man, and when strongly impressed by merit did not content himself with his personal gratification, but both spoke and wrote of the subject with every wish to serve; and in the case of Mrs. Jordan,

fortunately, with the power. Smith felicitated the manager, and attended every performance of the actress while he stayed in York, and Wilkinson became somewhat alarmed lest he should lose his charmer through this enthusiasm; however, he had taken care to make her sign an article before they quitted Leeds, and the forfeiture of a theatrical article, reader, is attended by a penal condition not very soluble to a rival manager, and quite destructive to an unaided actress.

At York Mrs. Jordan assumed the part of Arionelli in the "Son-in-law," and played it with laughable effect; but I own I can hardly conceive an exhibition more incongruous. For what is the point burlesqued? That a male in the Italian Opera sings with a voice that resembles in its upper tones that of a female; and the more of a Hercules the actor's form displays, the more risible will be the shrill effeminacy of his voice. In old Bannister this contrast was perfect. But place a female in Arionelli, and all contrast is at an end; dress her how you will, the spectator sees that it is a woman, and for a woman to sing soprano is natural, and can excite no laughter. If it be the Italian style only that she burlesques, the laugh is merely the laugh of ignorance; if it

be the figure and the foreign utterance, the first cannot be assumed, and the latter ends with the first speech. There is one point, to be sure, in the dialogue, that suits alike the character of Arionelli and his representative. As to marrying the old man's daughter, they may either of them declare, "it is quite out of my way." The favourite, either in the theatre or on the course, is apt to engross the attention. To give Mrs. Jordan Arionelli offended the actor who had before represented it, and Mr. Wilkinson lost the services of a deserving man, a Mr. Tyler, on this occasion. Something was expected from Knight, our old favourite, who had come from Edinburgh, into the York company, to support the gay and sparkling characters of the drama, and he had Lothario assigned to him, that he might act with the Jordan in the "Fair Penitent." How he should fail in it so entirely as he did, I can with difficulty conceive: his figure admirably suited the part; he was an actor who weighed everything he uttered critically all his life; indeed, the sagacious manager ventured to recommend any other profession in the world to him rather than the stage. The actor was too firmly upon his centre to be overthrown by this shock, rude as it was. He had "that within

which passeth show," and smiled at the manager's injunction and his fears ; from the latter of which Mr. Knight soon recovered his friend Tate by some admirable performances, till at length he gained at Bath a very high and merited reputation.

In the midst of this career of Mrs. Jordan, her attention, for a moment only, was called to the début of a Lady Leake, who, from "a train of unavoidable misfortunes," had sought the refuge of a theatre, as her husband had been compelled to accept that of the King's Bench. A "rag of quality" has a stage attraction to the little great — they delight their own vanity in the exercise of their compassion, and support the manager, though they never can the actress. This lady had not soared indecently with her inexperienced wings : she levelled but at Amelia, in Colman's "English Merchant ;" but, after all, the policy may be questioned that seeks to make impression where no impression can be made. In a part powerfully written, a character boldly drawn, the novice is supported, in some degree, by the dress she wears. In the boyish declamations of our schools, you will admire the nervous beauties they deliver, however limited their powers of delivery may be ; and the speaker has some share, at least, in the applause

excited. Give a boy mediocrity to dole out, and you are sure to yawn, if you do not sleep, and his relations will clap the only hands at his exit. At rehearsal, in the morning, this lady's voice seemed to fill the empty region like a bell, as she exclaimed, triumphantly, to the manager — but the bell was muffled in the evening, and its faint efforts disturbed no ear in the front of the theatre. The audience allowed their pity to silence their censure, and Lady Leake courted her fortune where we sincerely hope that she was kinder.

In addition to the chance of some rival's disturbing her ascendancy, Mrs. Jordan needed all the friendship of her manager to protect her from the ill-will of the community. Some of his kindness to her, the patentee has not allowed to depend for its fame upon her own recollection, and of one piece, his recital may provoke the risibility of the reader. "I introduced her," says Tate, "to our critic, Mr. Cornelius Swan,[1] of York,

[1] Swan had the very demon of tuition in him. On a report, in the decline of his life, that Garrick was about to resume the part of Othello, he teased him with his remarks upon the play, at immeasurable length; and the manager transferred them to George Steevens, who, as Shakespeare's editor, thought, at first, there might be something in the labours of Cornelius, and that he might better regulate the stage directions in the play, by any

who said he would teach her to act." And when Mrs. Jordan was ill, he was admitted to the little bedchamber, where, by the side of the bed, with Mrs. Bland's old red cloak round his neck, he would sit and instruct his pupil in Hill's character of Zara. "You must revive that tragedy, Wilkinson," said he, "for I have given the Jordan but three lessons, and she is so adroit at receiving my instructions, that I declare she repeats the character as well as Mrs. Cibber ever did; nay, let me do the Jordan justice, for I do not exceed, when with truth I declare, Jordan speaks it as well as I could myself." Cornelius, in his fondness,

reasonable notions upon the subject of the terrible end of Desdemona. But the Swan of York and the Ouse was, at length, deemed to have little in common with that of Stratford and the Avon; and the page of Shakespeare was not allowed to boast the improvements of Cornelius Swan. Not that Steevens was at all sullen to the claims of our metropolitical city upon Shakespeare; for, I remember, he used to carry Harry Rowe's "Macbeth" in his pocket, and, sometimes, when any difference between himself and Malone upon a probable reading of the text was mentioned, he would say, with that glance of mischief which was so peculiar to him, "Now, sir, Harry Rowe, the trumpeter, decides the point with infinitely less trouble!"

It is needless to add that Mr. Garrick, during the latter part of his career, dropped the part of Othello altogether. The complexion of the noble Moor lessened the brilliant efficacy of his eye. Take from the snake its power of fascination, and its prey is gone.

adopted her as his child, but, at his death, he did not leave her a shilling.

In the usual order of the circuit, Wakefield and Doncaster enjoyed the excellence of the new actress, and confident in her strength, the manager thought that Sheffield itself might merit an invasion from the troop, though, of late, that town had shown an almost ruinous indifference to theatrical amusement. But that experiment may be sufficient for danger, which yields no profit. Mrs. Jordan, at Sheffield, was placed in peril of her life. The occasion was this. Pilon had brought out at Drury Lane Theatre, in May, 1782, an opera called the "Fair American." From this opera his misfortunes were to be dated. Carter, his composer, sued him for his charge for very indifferent music; the poor author had no profits himself from the theatre, and was obliged to abscond. As the last novelty that had succeeded, though not brilliantly, the York manager procured a copy of it, and it was acted at Sheffield, on the 18th of October, 1782. The scene discovered Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Knight sitting at tea, as chambermaid and footman, and the audience were enjoying their humour, when, on a sudden, without the slightest warning, what is technically called

a curtain, with its ponderous wooden roller, fell from the roof of the theatre at their feet; had they been a few inches more forward on the stage, or had they been advancing from their seats toward the front, one or both of them might have been crushed to death, and the stage of Garrick never have witnessed an attraction in comedy equal to his own.

The fine lady, in comedy, of the York company, at this time, was Mrs. Smith, an actress of great diligence and merit; in all other respects the very opposite to poor Jordan, as she was well connected, in very comfortable circumstances, happy in her husband and her friends, and in possession of the most valuable line of business in the theatre.

This lady expected, at the end of September, an increase to her family, and the great object of her thoughts was to make the periods before and after her confinement as short as possible, that her rival might not appear, or, at least, not be seen often, in any of the characters that she considered her own; such as Emmeline, Lady Racket, Lady Bell, Lady Teazle, Lady Alton, Indiana, and others in that cast. She, therefore, rendered the virgin purity of some of them rather questionable to the

eye, and was admonished by the manager to withdraw, since the quick study of Mrs. Jordan could at any time supply her place at a day's notice, and it was, therefore, idle to inconvenience herself in her present situation. Her confinement took place on the 2d of October, in a remarkably wet season, and on the 13th the march of the troop was to take place from Doncaster to Sheffield. In her impatience to act, soon after her delivery, in a damp garden, she absolutely began to exercise herself daily, in order that she might be able to perform the journey of eighteen miles to Sheffield. She performed the journey, it is true, but the result of her folly was a lameness in the hip, which for some time threatened serious consequences. Lame as she was, however, rather than submit to Mrs. Jordan's performing her part of Fanny, in the "Clandestine Marriage," she determined to hobble through it herself, though really as crippled as Lord Ogleby seemed, and absolutely rendered herself incapable, by it, of all exertion, from the end of October to the middle of December.

It was at Sheffield that the late amiable Duke of Norfolk commenced an admiration of Mrs. Jordan which continued through life: he was an

honourable and useful friend, on many occasions, in her theatrical progress. Some patronage she had at her benefit, but neither she nor her manager could boast of their profits, though the river Don converted all their iron into gold for the industrious dwellers upon its banks. And thus it was that, employed, but not supported, the company left Sheffield for Kingston-upon-Hull.

Although the prefix of Mrs. to her name might have been thought a sufficient apology for the indisposition which confined her to her apartments at Hull till the month of December, yet her success had been so great, and the mortification of her stage sisters so complete, that they availed themselves of all the artifices of insinuation to lower her attraction with the lady patronesses of Hull; and represented her moral character to be such as to render her unworthy of their notice. The affected regret that, with talents like hers, there should be so much to reprove in her conduct,

> "The shrug — the hum — the ha — those petty brands
> That calumny doth use," —

worked their way so effectually, that, in spite of the applause which had run before her, she was

but coolly received on the evening after the Christmas festival, when she acted her admired "Calista," and followed it by the famous "Highland Laddie." There was a cold and sarcastic application of the character of the heroine to the performer, among the ladies, which chilled the actress, and rendered the scene languid; so little harmony had these ungracious beings retained about them, that anything like hilarity offended their prejudice, and Mrs. Jordan was absolutely that night hissed in her song, which had previously received the most unfailing applause.

Her own good sense, and the advice of her judicious and friendly manager, led her to bear up against this temporary displeasure, and when it was fully made known that her manners were as decorous as her diligence was extraordinary, and that scandal, at all events, could not deny her professional power to delight, the town at last gave up a scrutiny that they had no great right to institute into the private history of this popular representative; and their smiling presence, on common nights, not being withdrawn at her benefit, the mutual good understanding produced mutual advantage, for the actress's talents improved with her circumstances.

Thus, at length happily established in her profession, and looking now forward with some confidence to the ability of supporting the family so dear to her, closed the year 1782, — Mrs. Jordan's first season in the York company.

CHAPTER III.

The Year 1783 — Mrs. Jordan's Amazing Popularity in the Character of William, in "Rosina" — Mrs. Brooke the Authoress — Her Husband, Curate to Wilkinson's Father at the Savoy — The King's Chaplain Transported — Garrick's Officious Meddling —Mrs. Baddeley at York — A Lesson to Our Heroine of Negative Instruction — Mrs. Mills, Fawcett's First Wife, an Example of Application to Her — The Art of Mortifying a Scenic Rival — Mrs. Ward, a Great Professor — Mrs. Brown, the Wife of Harlequin Brown, Her "Country Girl" — Miss Wilkinson, afterward Mrs. Mountain — Season of 1785, the Last of Mrs. Jordan as a Member of the York Company — An Instance of Her Caprice — Sees Mrs. Yates as Margaret of Anjou — Dick Yates's Opinion of Mrs. Jordan — Mrs. Siddons Also for Rustication — Mrs. Robinson, the Prophetess — Takes Leave of Yorkshire in the "Poor Soldier," to Proceed to London.

THE year 1783 added to Mrs. Jordan's range of characters one which was applauded and followed with enthusiasm. It was no other than the part of William in Mrs. Brooke's unaffected rustic opera called "Rosina." The neatness of her figure in the male attire was for years remarkable; but the attraction after all is purely feminine, and the display of female, not

male perfections. Did the lady really look like a man, the coarse *androgynus* would be hooted from the stage.

Mrs. Brooke was truly an ingenious woman and an excellent novelist. Her husband had been the curate of Wilkinson's father at the Savoy, and the imagined exemption of that place from the operation of the marriage act actually exposed the king's chaplain to transportation. The anguish of an innocent but wounded spirit precipitated his end; the government of that time persisting in the sacrifice of the venerable victim, who, contrary to law, had presumed to unite the willing in the holy bands of matrimony, without the publication of banns, or the shorter permission of Doctors Commons. Mrs. Wilkinson in vain placed a petition in the hand of George the Second. Not the slightest notice whatever was taken of it. But it was odd enough that this catastrophe was brought on by the officious meddling of David Garrick, on the occasion of Vernon's marrying Miss Poitier. Such recollections rendered "Rosina" an object of great interest to Tate Wilkinson, and he got it up with his utmost ability.

It was during the spring meeting at York this year that Mrs. Jordan had one of those early les-

sons, which are hardly to be remembered without shuddering. I allude to the appearance there of the beautiful Mrs. Baddeley. At her arrival she impressed her audiences in the most favourable manner. In opera she performed Clarissa, Polly, and Rosetta; and Imogen in the play of "Cymbeline," in which her beautiful countenance used to excite the greatest interest. Among her peculiarities was an immoderate addiction to laudanum, which has the power of bestowing a momentary vivacity, subsiding into an oblivion of care, succeeded by a wretchedness which itself alone can remove; the patient thus lives a course of mental delusion, neither his pleasures nor his pains being the fair effects of circumstances, and the charmed life bearing a fatality about it infinitely more dreadful than the natural lot from which it has escaped. It may reasonably be supposed that on the night of her benefit she sought the doubtful aid in question, but it proved a treacherous ally. She was unfortunately lame at the time, and intoxicated to stupidity by the fumes of the opiate she had swallowed. The worst of it was that, the habit not being generally known, the stupefaction was attributed to drunkenness, and a disgust taken, which is seldom, or rather never, quite removed.

The sequel of this unfortunate's existence may be worth a second paragraph. She soon became idle, disordered, unsteady, and of no value in the theatre, dropped into contempt and neglect, and was plundered of the little she had, by one of those attached friends which indolence is happy to find, and of which it is invariably the prey. Mrs. Baddeley had at one time her carriage, and every voluptuous accompaniment that a mere sensualist can enjoy: but her wealth mouldered away, insensibly and unaccountably, and she died at Edinburgh shortly after, in the most squalid poverty and disease, in a state of mental horror which perhaps opium only is able to inflict upon us. To the last she was supported by the charity of the profession, always awake to a sister's claim; though on this occasion, with the dreadful reflection that, either as to herself or society, it would have been better if her release had earlier arrived. By which, in truth, the one had escaped much inconceivable torment, and the other the burthen of a hopeless benevolence.

Whoever has attentively observed and considered the life of an actress may often wonder that the long repetition of even the most finished characters does not diminish the power of the charmer; or,

if he does not look at it in this way, come to a not very favourable decision, that the whole is quite mechanical, and that, like a timepiece in order, the performance of one day is exactly similar to that of another, equally regular as to the whole, and equally striking in the proper situations. But there is, in the smoothest passage through a theatre, sufficient to ruffle the temper, to annoy the self-love, to excite the jealousy or the dread of the coldest temperaments. Every such incident renovates the charm by stimulating the exertion; and they cannot forget the public until they forget themselves.

But to return. The lesson of Mrs. Baddeley was a "negative instruction" to our young actress; she had another of a very different kind, in the person of Mrs. Mills, subsequently Mrs. John Fawcett. This lady had a zeal, an application, a versatility perhaps unequalled in the profession; her value was invaluable. She seemed to be informed by one master principle only, — the prosperity of the company. She was the steady lever of the daily work, she was the prop on any emergency, and her kindness was equal to her fidelity. To the manager her services were bound; but, he consenting, she would study any

novelty, deprive herself even of needful rest, to serve the benefit of any brother or sister in the community. At the death of her first husband, a valuable actor, Mrs. Mills became united to Mr. Fawcett, and maintained her honourable estimation to the lamented period of her death in 1797. Thus, with Cato, the Jordan might be said to be "doubly armed" as an actress.

> "Her death, her life, her bane and antidote,
> Were both before her.
> This in a moment brings her to an end;
> While that informs her she shall never die."

The desire to see this charming woman in William continued, and the "Poor Soldier" being got up in the spring of 1784, she was by acclamation saluted the Patrick of the piece, and it was pronounced to be unapproachable, let who would contest the palm with her.

There was another lesson taught our excellent actress by the York company, — the art of mortifying a rival. This art was practised in its highest perfection by a Mrs. Ward, a competitor with the Jordan in the male attire, and remarkably fond of the display. This lady's husband was in the band, and therefore, we must presume, fully per-

mitted the exhibition of his wife's charms, since it took place nightly in his own presence. This lady was at the head of a band of malignants, who were accustomed to take their seats at the stage doors while Mrs. Jordan was acting, and, by every description of annoyance, try at least to lessen her power by disturbing her self-possession. They persevered in this cruelty so long, that at last the ingenuity of the persecuted taught her a very delicate "measure of revenge." She would, with little aid from the imagination, frequently go upon the stage with her eyelids irritated and the tear-drop starting from them, as though ill or recently affected by injury. This became noticed by the audience and begat inquiry, whether their favourite was indisposed, or anything had offended her? She took care that several friends should be ready with the proper answer to the query, and thus the ungenerous treatment recoiled upon the heads of her enemies. There was a law, to be sure, in the York theatre, as well as others, to prevent any such occupancy of the stage-doors; but there are subjects too mighty for any theatrical laws, and the manager made assurance doubly sure by calling in the aid of a padlock whenever the doors were not essential to the stage business. Thus he

chastised the malignity of the invaders, and the punishment was not the less felt for not being personally administered. Any individual to whom the cause was hinted could say, "It may be so. I won't assert that no member of the company might disturb Mrs. Jordan; but, for my own part, I never sat at the door but from the fair curiosity to see how she would act in particular situations, and consider the points she made for my own improvement; and this, madam, my own husband commanded me to do."

Although the character of Mrs. Jordan's acting was truly personal, by which I mean that in every part she played she infused herself more completely than any other actress has done, yet still she did not deny her performance the benefit of what other minds had thrown out, and very willingly adopted the points of other artists when they naturally combined with her own. There was an actress in the company, of great comic power, though very unequal in her performances; she was the wife of Brown, who, in the years 1786 and 1787, became the Harlequin of Covent Garden Theatre. Mrs. Brown, in her range of performances, acted the Country Girl, a character which, however it happened, until then had never

attracted the particular attention of Mrs. Jordan. Our heroine paid her the compliment of seeing and deeply considering this performance; she noticed the business of the part, and in the sallies of a performer then by no means young, saw the ground she determined herself to occupy, with more seasonable graces and more truly girlish hilarity and whim. It was hence said that Mrs. Brown taught her to play the part, but this was by no means the case; for at that time, as it proved in town shortly after, the preëminence of Mrs. Jordan was admitted by all — her elastic spring, her peculiarly artless action, her laugh, and the rich tones of her articulate voice were at all times peculiar and triumphant.

About this time an incident occurred to which the heart and memory of Jordan were feelingly alive. A young lady, not more than fifteen, attracted perhaps by the name of the manager, which was then her own, applied to Tate Wilkinson for an engagement. She had her parents with her, who depended upon her for their subsistence; her musical talent was even then considerable, her figure small, but extremely neat, her features beautiful and interesting. My readers will have no difficulty in admitting all this, and

more, when I tell them the young lady became the late Mrs. Mountain, of Covent Garden Theatre. Wilkinson thought himself so circumstanced at this juncture that, with some lingering compunction for doing so, he brought himself to decline the engagement; she was at liberty, it was true, to volunteer her talents for any of the company who might accept her aid. For one benefit she acted the Maid of the Mill, and fought her way through the popular "Lecture on Heads," by George Alexander Stevens. This made a little noise in the stage circle, and Mr. Inchbald, the son-in-law of the famous Mrs. Inchbald, thought it worth while to make her a handsome offer to act Rosetta, in "Love in a Village," on his benefit night, which was the 3d of December, 1784. Her impression in this character determined the manager, and he engaged her, though it lost him the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Powell, since at the Norwich theatre. She played for her namesake, the manager's night, Stella, in "Robin Hood," on the 21st; and needing some present relief, he graciously proposed a benefit to her, which was most thankfully accepted, and on the 31st of December "Lionel and Clarissa" was performed, Colonel Oldboy by the manager, Clarissa by Miss Wilkinson, first studied

on that occasion, and (what may not be done with benevolence working at the root?) Lionel by the charmer Jordan, who came forward with the warmth of a true sister, and imparted to the character of Lionel a feature of which its male representatives, for the most part, have seldom known the value, or have been unable to attain, its sensible utterance. Here, as in her own case, Mrs. Jordan happily saw an interesting young lady patronised equally for her filial affection and her talents. The opera was admired, and the famous "Lecture on Heads" rapturously applauded. *C'est le premier pas qui coute.* Miss Wilkinson had now a smooth road under her feet, and always spoke with pleasure of the kind aid which Mrs. Jordan had rendered at a time when it was almost vital to herself and her family. The metropolis puts the seal upon stage merits, and a town engagement has a steady comfort and respectability, infinitely preferable to the hurry and fatigue of provincial business; but actors are always fond of detailing their early adventures, and perhaps the various conditions of human occupation do not afford one so abounding in the essentials of a good story as the life of a country comedian.

The season of 1785 was the last that Mrs. Jor-

dan acted as a member of Wilkinson's company. It is a singular circumstance that she should have omitted to practise the usual address which leaves regret behind departure. I presume that she heard occasionally from Smith on the subject of a town engagement, though her removal to Drury Lane Theatre was not finally settled till the autumn of that year. There is a restlessness that precedes any material change of our condition, that breaks up our harmony with the existing relations of life. Mrs. Jordan, in the opinion of her manager, was now grown careless and indifferent; her desire to oblige diminished, her self-will increased, and she was capricious enough to excuse herself from obeying some calls upon her, which she showed herself equally able and unwilling to gratify. He gives an instance which we shall not shun, because censurable. For the benefit of Mr. Mills, March 15, 1785, she was announced in the bills to sing a song from "Summer's Amusement," at the end of the third act of "Cymbeline," and to act after the play the favourite character of Patrick in the "Poor Soldier," and sing the songs of the piece in course. But she absolutely refused to come on between the acts of "Cymbeline" merely to warble a ballad, and, whoever was disap-

pointed, or whatever might be the result, announced her determination to persist — nothing in the world should alter her. She was indisposed, and would not do it. With this mood of hers it was not likely that either manager or audience should concur. Had she been really ill, her course should have been to stay at home and let an apology be made for her. This, however distressing to the actor, whom it would compel to disappoint his patrons, if really true, must be borne; but to choose what she would do against the positive pledge of the playbill was a sort of treasonable rebellion, to be subdued by force and arms. She came to the house, and sullenly dressed herself at once for Patrick. She came early enough to hear, for it was impossible to enjoy, the gathering and the bursting of the storm. Mills came on the stage to address the house; but what could he say against that special bond, the playbill? The audience would hear nothing but the song from Mrs. Jordan; so, at last, on she came, very pale, fainting against the frontispiece in the dress of the Poor Soldier himself, and thus suited and very much out of sorts, was constrained to warble "In the Prattling Hours of Youth," composed by Doctor Arnold, and very pleasing. The

words, perhaps, have no great meaning in them, for the joint authors of the opera were Miles and Miles Peter Andrews. The manager suggests that the audience, perhaps, might not have conquered had the actress taken her benefit ; as that was yet to come, "her poverty, but not her will consented," and they were obeyed, but not gratified. Illness cannot be soon dismissed, whether real or fancied, in the face of the public.

On Tuesday, April 26, 1785, Mrs. Jordan had an opportunity of seeing that great actress, Mrs. Yates, in her favourite Margaret of Anjou, in Franklin's "Earl of Warwick." This was her last public appearance but one, in the following June, when she acted for the imbecile Bellamy, once the rival of Cibber herself. The farce after the tragedy was "Cymon," thus cast: Sylvia, Miss Wilkinson ; Fatima, Mrs. Jordan ; Dorcas, Mrs. Brown. One should have expected, from such an actor as Richard Yates, something like a sound judgment in his own art, but he thus spoke of the fair trine: "Miss Wilkinson, very pleasing and promising ; Mrs. Brown, the height of excellence ; Mrs. Jordan, merely a piece of theatrical mediocrity." But I am apt to think she might not choose to exert herself. Indeed, her

benefit at Leeds was very thinly attended on the 25th of July, though her Imogen had always been a favourite; and she added the "Fair American," an opera by Pilon, which was thought attractive. The same people, when she had visited London, crowded the same seats to suffocation. What had changed more than the circumstances of the actress? A good deal of prophecy was sported on her intended journey to London. One of her rivals in male costume told the manager that, "when he had lost his great treasure (the term he was fond of applying to the Jordan), it would soon be turned back upon his hands, and it would be glad to come, if he would accept it." The retort courteous was addressed to the same manager, for her daughter, by Mrs. Bland, who being seated at the stage-door, while Mrs. Robinson was on the stage, "begged, as an act of kindness, that he would inform her when 'that fright' had done speaking and acting, for it was so horrid she could not look at her." Now the fact really was that this "fright" was a very pretty woman, somewhat refined in her manners and utterance, and so peculiarly neat in her attire that it was a common compliment to say that the Graces attended her toilet.

Mrs. Siddons herself saw Mrs. Jordan at York, in the month of August, 1785, and seemed to think (by which I suppose Tate implies said) that "she was better where she was, than to venture on the London boards." Alas! she did not suspect how soon the "unthought of" Country Girl would even number carriages with her in the long procession to Drury Lane Theatre.

William Woodfall, it may be observed, gave the same advice to Mrs. Siddons, that she should keep to small theatres in the country, where she could be heard; she was too weak for the London stages. This indeed at the time was the fact; but let me add, in behalf of the great genius of tragedy, that, had the Cumæan Sybil herself announced the more than rival progress of the boy Betty, she would have been credited, perhaps, by the Muse of neither Tragedy nor Comedy, though such a poet as Virgil had added to her ravings the charms of immortal verse.

> "Can such things be,
> And overcome us like a summer cloud,
> Without our special wonder?"

Her last performance as a member of the company was at Wakefield, on Friday, Sept. 9, 1785, in the favourite "Poor Soldier," from which place

she set off for London with no great cheer of mind, for she was never sanguine, nor did the long experience of her popularity ever completely divest her of alarm. Some confidence she might place in Mr. Smith's judgment, but then to act the second parts in tragedy to the towering grandeur and deliberate style of Mrs. Siddons could not be contemplated without dismay. As to the salary, the preliminary condition went no farther than four pounds per week, and if it stopped there, her change of place was no advantage, since her circumstances could not improve. The town stamp, to be sure, gave a currency, but then the weight was to be considered, and the fashion to be verified. If her first article was not soon cancelled, it (to use Mrs. Robinson's neuter pronoun) would be glad to get back again to York and find its former station unoccupied. But something, in all these cases, must be risked. The state of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden companies is extremely well known, in our country theatres, from the circulation of our newspapers; in addition, the managers of such concerns are in correspondence continually with some town friends, who inform them of everything material to their interest. After much reflection, Mrs. Jordan thought she

saw a line open to her, of the youthful and tender in tragedy or Shakespearian comedy, with the whole class of romps either in the middle comedy or the modern farce; she there resolved to make her mark, not perhaps because she absolutely thought it best suited her own powers, for this it is probable she never was fully convinced of, but because there she would interfere no otherwise with Mrs. Siddons, or Miss Farren, or Miss Pope, than as popularity might so far divide with those ladies the honours of public patronage, and the smiles of a successful management. To the policy, perhaps propriety, of this decision, on many accounts, neither Sheridan nor King offered any objection; and it removed all such enmity as might be expected from invading the business of any other established favourite. With her patron Smith she was not likely to act much, unless she came into tragedy: as the gentleman in comedy, he was most frequently at the side of Miss Farren, and unquestionably the most accomplished man with whom she ever played; for Palmer was never perfectly the gay honourable man of the world, however plausible, insinuating, and graceful in display, and such qualities on the stage, as in life itself, are rather the means by

which the designing succeed, than the manifestations of the truly valuable in human character. Let the reader conceive these two actors to have exchanged characters as the Charles and Joseph of the "School for Scandal."

CHAPTER IV.

The Ascendency of Mrs. Siddons — Struggle of Covent Garden — Mrs. Abington — Mr. Henderson — Miss Farren Compared with the Former Abington — The Hopes Entertained that the "Country Girl" might Revive the Train of Comedy — Within and Without-door Talk of Her — Her First Appearance, on the 18th of October, 1785 — Mrs. Inchbald's Opinion of Her — Fulness and Comic Richness of Tone not Provincialism — Excited Unbounded Laughter — Her Male Figure — Her Letter Scene — About Nineteen, the Age of Miss Peggy — Henderson — Mr. Harris — Mrs. Inchbald — Her Stepson and Mrs. Jordan — Her Viola, in "Twelfth Night," Particularly Examined — Barbarous Curtailments of the Play — Viola Succeeded by Imogen — Mrs. Clive Dies — Compared, in Some Points, with Mrs. Jordan — The "Heiress" Had No Part for Mrs. Jordan — "She Would and She Would Not," Her Hypolita — The "Irish Widow," on Her Benefit Night — Now, Certainly, the Great Support of the Theatre.

THE success of Mrs. Siddons had been too dazzling not to excite envy in the profession. If there could be any competition with her excellence, it was in the recollection of the dead rather than the performances of the living that it was to be found. Mrs. Siddons,

too, maintained a distance in her manners that irritated the self-love of those with whom she mixed in the business of the stage; and she was supposed to show rather strongly the consciousness of living familiarly with the higher orders. She had in fact monopolised their attention and their patronage. Her nights of performance alone were well attended, and she had two benefits each season, for which everything fashionable reserved itself; and the benefits of others, if she did not act for them, were reduced nearly to the actor's private connection, and many were disappointed in their little circles by an apology that ended with, "You know we must go on Mrs. Siddons's night; and we then leave town directly."

Indeed, the very performances of the stage had little attention in which the great actress did not appear; and the farces after her tragedy were acted with slender effect, and to audiences diminished to half their number — the genteeler portion for the most part quitting the theatre when the tragedy ended, that the impression she had made might remain undisturbed. The delicate and feeling, after the agony they had endured, were commonly as much exhausted by their sympathy as the actress had been by her exertions; and they

really were unable to enjoy the ensuing pleasantry, which five minutes and a green curtain only divided from their sorrows. By going, they secured the privilege too of talking solely of the fashionable idol, and were content to be listened to simply as talking about her who interested everybody, and whom all were solicitous to be thought to know. For a time it may be supposed the other theatre struggled against the stream. Mrs. Abington had some claims upon fashionable life, whose taste she had formerly led, and with the aid of Henderson revived the charm that had attended the wit and the perverse courtship of Benedick and Beatrice. But she had passed her meridian; and although I am perfectly satisfied that Miss Farren, in comedy, never approached her nearer than Mrs. Esten did Mrs. Siddons, in tragedy, — that she never took her ground, as one may say, in a style of such absolute authority, — yet the beauty of her countenance, and at least ladylike appearance of her figure and manners, the sense that constantly proceeded from her, and the refined style of her utterance, her youth, and fashionable connection, at length established her in the cast of genteel and sentimental comedy, and I found the younger part of the critical world

little aware how much Lady Teazle lost in being transferred to Miss Farren. But all this made no éclat; it did not injure one feather in the crest of the tragic queen. Something that, if it did not destroy, at least divided with her, the public attention, was the daily hope of the troop, who found themselves nothing in her presence; and every eye was turned to the "Country Girl," who might put matters upon a footing nearer equality, and, by establishing herself, revive the public recollection that such men as King, Smith, Palmer, Parsons, Dodd, and Bannister merited to be at least not totally deserted, and were not, perhaps, without important claims among those who promote the happiness of the human race.

But whatever the rehearsals on the stage of Drury might have shown of the new actress, the without-door world, I remember, was not very much assailed. The puff preliminary had not been greatly resorted to, and the common inquiries produced the usual answers of discretion. "I think she is clever. One thing I can tell you, she is like nothing you have been used to. Her laugh is good, but then she is, or seems to be, very nervous. We shall see. But I am sure we want something."

At length, on Tuesday, the 18th of October, 1785, the curtain drew up to the "Country Girl" of Mrs. Jordan. This was a very judicious alteration by Garrick (with perhaps some regard to Lee's) from the "Country Wife" of Wycherley. One is astonished, in referring to the original in that poet's volume, to see the impurities which encrusted it, and that any man, capable of all that is sufficient for comic effect in it, should have so bad a taste as to pollute either his mind or his paper with the vile bestialities stuck about the business, and really impeding the action. There is little now to offend even the scrupulous, and the comedy is extremely lively when a Peggy, the author's Pinchwife, can be found.

Mrs. Inchbald knew her in the York company, and records of her that "she came to town with no report in her favour, to elevate her above a very moderate salary (four pounds), or to attract more than a very moderate house when she appeared. But here moderation stopped. She at once displayed such consummate art, with such bewitching nature, — such excellent sense, and such innocent simplicity, — that her auditors were boundless in their plaudits, and so warm in her praises, when they left the theatre, that their

friends at home would not give credit to the extent of their eulogiums."

Nothing can be more exactly true than this report. I agree also with that lady in the melody of her voice; but in the remark that "her pronunciation was imperfect," I cannot concur. "Most of her words were uttered with a kind of provincial dialect." It was not of that description at all. It was a principle of giving to certain words a fulness and comic richness, which rendered them more truly representatives of the ideas they stood for; it was expressing all the juice from the grape of the laughing vine. To instance once for all. She knew the importance attached to a best gown. Let the reader recollect the full volume of sound which she threw into those words, and he will understand me. It was not provincial dialect — it was humourous delivery, and, as a charm, only inferior to her laugh. Again, "But I don't" — "I won't" — "Bud" — "Grum," and a hundred others, to which she communicated such blurt significance, such whimsical cadence, as showed she was the great mistress of comic utterance, and aware of all the infinite varieties which modify the effects of the human voice. Henderson had the same sort of talent without the perfect voice. It

was best displayed in his reading. A reflection upon this hint will show what a narrow, imperfect, and even delusive record printing must needs be, of what in living speech accompanied the utterance of the mere words. Such was Mrs. Jordan when she burst upon the metropolis, in the year 1785. Perhaps no actress ever excited so much laughter. The low comedian has a hundred resorts by which risibility may be produced. In addition to a ludicrous cast of features, he may resort, if he chooses, to the buffoonery of the fair; he may dress himself ridiculously; he may border even upon indecency in his action, and be at least a general hint of *double entendre*, to those whose minds are equally impure. But the actress has nothing beyond the mere words she utters, but what is drawn from her own hilarity, and the expression of features, which never submit to exaggeration. She cannot pass by the claims of her sex, and self-love will preserve her from any willing diminution of her personal beauty. How exactly had this child of nature calculated her efficacy, that no intention on her part was ever missed, and, from first to last, the audience responded uniformly in an astonishment of delight. In the third act they more clearly saw what gave

the elasticity to her step. She is made to assume the male attire; and the great painter of the age pronounced her figure the neatest and most perfect in symmetry that he had ever seen. This distinction remained with her a long time, notwithstanding the many family encroachments upon the public pleasure.

But her fertility as an actress was at its height in the letter scene, perhaps the most perfect of all her efforts, and the best *jeu de théâtre* known without mechanism. The very pen and ink were made to express the rustic petulance of the writer of the first epistle, and the eager delight that composed the second, which was to be despatched instead of it to her lover. King was her Moody upon this occasion, but I thought Wroughton afterward gave more effect to the intimidation. He had a vast deal of truth in his comedy, and concealed every appearance of the actor's art.

There was a seeming coincidence in the ages of the actress and the character she played. The play concludes with some rhymes, no great achievement, it is true, — I suppose them Garrick's, — in which Miss Peggy apologises for deserting her Bud:

"I've reasons will convince you all, and strong ones;
Except old folks, who hanker after young ones:

Bud was so passionate, and grown so thrifty,
'Twas a sad life: — and then he was near fifty! —
I'm but nineteen."

Perhaps Mrs. Jordan looked rather more, not in her action, which was juvenile to the last, but the comic maturity of her expression seemed to announce a longer experience of life and of the stage than could have been attained at nineteen. She retired that night from the theatre, happy to the extent of her wishes, and satisfied that she would not long be rated on the treasurer's books at four pounds per week. Smith congratulated with her very sincerely. He had bestowed upon the theatre, which he loved, a new and a powerful magnet, able to attract on the off nights of Mrs. Siddons, and even strengthen those of tragedy; which, with no greater force than Cumberland evinced in the "Carmelite," began to need something auxiliary.

Henderson was now acting the "Roman Father" at the other house, in which he made wonderful effect. He had seen Mrs. Jordan in Ireland and at York, and was fully satisfied of her great merit; but Mr. Harris did not feel it, or was on the opposition side of the house: he said she would be an excellent Filch; and here he prophesied, for she stole away the hearts of the town, and

tried all his skill as a manager, great as it confessedly was.

The "Country Girl" was repeated on the third night of performance at Drury Lane; that is, "Braganza" and "Measure for Measure" only intervening, so that they allowed her till the Monday of the following week, when the two houses commenced acting together for the season, and she had the honour of dividing the town that evening with Henderson, who repeated his "Roman Father" with Mrs. Inchbald's amusing farce of "Appearance Is Against Them." The sudden passage of this lady's muse from neglect to managerial welcome — the talent and the specimens remaining exactly the same during the opposite sentences, — shows how little real judgment enters into such decisions. The success of a "Mogul Tale," a farcical extravaganza, founded on the balloon mania, and unworthy of the press, at length rendered Mr. Harris and Mr. Colman alike willing to afford her a clear stage for her talents as a writer. As an actress she had been some time in the Covent Garden company. Her beauty had suggested her as a successor to Mrs. Hartley; but she never could absolutely clear her utterance from the effects of an impediment, which has given rise

to some amusing stories among the minor wits of the theatre.

Mrs. Jordan was said to have discovered some partiality to this lady's stepson by Mr. Inchbald's first wife. The humble Nell, of the York stage, had not the necessary weight in the balance to determine the gentleman. After her town experiment, he began to estimate her value by the popular standard, and brought himself to make proposals, which were seriously declined. He might have been honoured, had his delicacy forbade him to entertain any notion of a union, circumstanced as the young lady was; but when he could teach his principle to give way to his interest, he merited the rejection of his temptation for a weightier. The mention of Mrs. Inchbald introduced this anecdote before its actual period; but if the lady's turn to refuse was subsequent to our present date, the gentleman's took place before it; and it may as well, therefore, stand where we have been led by any thread to work it into the narrative.

On the 28th of the month, Mrs. Jordan acted Peggy a third time, and her bark might be said to have safely landed her. She now was persuaded to indulge the town with a steadier gaze at her

male figure, and chose the part of Viola in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," a character of infinite delicacy and enchanting eloquence; one, in a word, where the great poet exhibits a sensibility so truly feminine, that in his world of wonders it has scarcely yet excited sufficient critical praise. We were now to make the experiment how her "provincial dialect" would be borne in the music of verse, such as even Shakespeare has seldom written. "It was all well enough," said the venerable stagers, "while she could romp it away with a jump and a laugh; but what will they say to her in the loving and beloved Viola, who acts so tenderly and 'speaks so masterly' all the science of the passion, in words that 'echo truly' all its best feelings?" What! why, that the mere melody of her utterance brought tears into the eyes, and that passion had never had so modest and enchanting an interpreter. In a word, it was Nature herself showing us the heart of her own mystery, and at the same time throwing out a proud defiance to Art to approach it for a moment. She long continued to delight the town with her Viola, which she thus acted for the first time on the 11th of November, 1785.

English audiences seldom know more of a play

than is spoken from the stage, and the modern collection of English plays contains no more than the mutilators of the drama think proper to preserve of the author's text. I perceive in the passage above, that I have indulged in a favourite practice of throwing into a sentence some of the inimitable language of the poet, and usually in the play under consideration. The happy possessors of these stage copies have never either seen or heard the expressions so introduced, and I shall give a just notion of the injury done to our great poet by quoting the sentences connected with the lovely character of Viola. In the third scene of the second act, the duke (Viola being present as Cesario) calls to his musicians to play the tune of an "old and antique song," which had given more relief to his passion —

> "Than the light airs and recollected terms
> Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times."

He follows its repetition by this question to the youth at his side.

> "*Duke.* How dost thou like this tune?
> *Vio.* It gives a very echo to the seat
> Where love is thron'd.
> *Duke.* Thou dost speak masterly."

The player who dismissed this short passage, in the language of Othello —

> "Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe."

And that, as it should seem, merely to relieve the gentlemen in the orchestra from the trouble of playing a few bars of pathetic and appropriate music.

> "Who would not laugh, if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?"

In the original play, Feste, the jester, is brought in to sing the song, and his appearance draws another beautiful remark from the duke to his young favourite:

> "Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain;
> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
> Do use to chant it: it is silly sooth,
> And dallies with the innocence of love,
> Like the old age."

And then follows the song written by Shakespeare, "Come Away, Come Away, Death," which wandered about the pendulous world a long while, until at last Kelly and Crouch bound it fast to the "Pizarro" of Sheridan and Kotzebue; but the

notes of the musician echoing too faithfully the burthen of those feeble words "come away," the whole appeared too light for the occasion.

It is in this scene, too, that the tender poet has given us the fine picture of a hopeless passion pining in thought, and gracing a rooted grief with the faint smile which Patience for ever wears upon some monument to the dead. Retaining this point for Viola, the wretched taste alluded to cut away all the essential preparation for such a thing, and marred the exquisite address of the poet. But enough.

In the great variety of the character, with the duke, Olivia, and the drunken assailants, Mrs. Jordan found ample field for her powers; and she long continued to delight the town in Viola, which she thus acted for the first time at Drury Lane Theatre on the 11th of November, 1785.

Viola is but the comedy of Imogen in "Cymbeline," and the one part seemed to be the step to the other, which Mrs. Jordan indeed acted on the 21st. The truth, however, was that Mrs. Siddons had invested tragedy so completely with her own requisites, that it was only in the male habit that Mrs. Jordan seemed the true and perfect Imogen. She had not the natural dignity of

the wife of Posthumus. She could not burst upon the insolent Iachimo in the terrors of offended virtue. She could not wear the lightnings of scorn in her countenance. She hardly seemed out of personal danger, whereas Imogen could only be shocked by the impurity of suggestion, and knew her virtue, no less than her rank, secured her from a profane touch, let who might be the audacious libertine in her presence. It never was a favourite performance, and we were rejoiced when she found another Romp in the Miss Hoyden of the "Trip to Scarborough," which she acted on the 9th of January, 1786.

There are certain coincidences in the things of this world that force themselves on our minds, as if they were bound by some relation of design. On the 6th of December, 1785, the only comic actress who could be named with Mrs. Jordan died. We allude to the great Catherine Clive, who then expired at her cottage near Walpole's Gothic plaything called Strawberry Hill; but not till she had heard from the best authority that the Nell, which had established her own reputation in the year 1731, would at length find a second representative equally favoured by nature with herself, and who resembled her also in the brilliant attraction which

she gave to the male habit. The second actress, like the first, had at once doubled her salary by her enchanting naïveté; and if Cibber, the great author of the "Careless Husband," had done this piece of justice to the original Nell, Sheridan, the not less great, though less fertile author of the "School for Scandal," conferred the same benefit upon her successor. Clive, though she tried composition, had never mastered the elements of language, and she spelled most audaciously. Jordan, though she left the drama to authors by profession, wrote an occasional address as smartly as any of them; and her letters were always distinguished for a pointed accuracy and great marks of sound judgment.

The Country Girl had begun to excite rather valuable notice, when she was met in her career rather unpropitiously by a new comedy of first-rate merit, in which she had no part, all the characters being distributed among the old established actors of the Drury Lane company. I allude to Burgoyne's "Heiress," first acted on the 14th of January, 1786. When I say unpropitiously, I do not mean to imply any designed injury; there was no character in the comedy that would at all have suited Mrs. Jordan's powers. Lady Emily was, in fact,

a complimentary sketch of Miss Farren herself. Miss Alscrip looked absolutely like another sketch of Miss Pope, though certain not complimentary. Miss Alton suited the beauty of Mrs. Crouch, and Blandish's sister parasite, like himself, appeared only to be detested. The Christmas pantomime of "Hurly Burly" was the running afterpiece; so that she was not frequently before the public eye, for her farces hitherto were only the "Romp" and the "Virgin Unmasked." The confinement of Mrs. Siddons took place on the 28th of December, so that she did not return to the stage till early in February. I observed then, however, that they did not use Mrs. Jordan after the tragedies: the great actress could fill the houses herself. The "Heiress," however, was indebted to her for support; the latter account would have been very thin without her.

At length, King put into rehearsal the comedy of "She Would and She Would Not," it is but fair to presume, that he might have the pleasure of exhibiting Mrs. Jordan in the famous Hypolita, a character of nearly unequalled bustle, and involved in comic business so complicated and ingenious, as it is hardly possible could have occurred to any wit who was not by profession an actor, and it is

but fair to Colley Cibber to add, to no actor who was not a wit. There is wit, be it remembered, in situation, in readiness, in extrication, involution; the making deliverance renew perplexity, and perplexity itself generate relief. When certain critics have denied wit to this comedy, they seem to have limited the term to a mere *jeu de mot.* But whatever be the predominant quality of Cibber, it is not exhausted by his brilliant heroine; for Trappanti is fully equal to Hypolita. "To serve thyself, my cousin," might as fairly have been said to King at least as Buckingham, on this occasion; for Trappanti was the character by nature best fitted to his face of brass. He played it inimitably well, to be sure, and Parsons and Miss Pope sustained Don Manuel and Villetta. Yet these consummate artists could, by a favourite critic, be merely said to be little inferior to the darling of nature in her twenty-fourth year. It was first acted on the 27th of March, and continued a stock play while Mrs. Jordan remained in the company.

The Whigs of that day had a very strong personal attachment in their politics: they loved the principles sometimes for the men, and the men frequently for the principles. Burgoyne being attached to the Earl of Derby, they supported

Mrs. Jordan as Hypolita

Engraved in mezzotint by Jones, after the painting by Hoppner

ardently the "Heiress" and Miss Farren; but they were not insensible to the claims of Mrs. Jordan, and on the night of her benefit, when she repeated Hypolita, and played the "Irish Widow" for the first time, such an audience was collected as had been very seldom seen, and the Whig club made her a very handsome present, as a tribute to her merit.

She was now certainly the great support of the theatre; she frequently acted in play and farce on the same night, and for three months together hardly had more than one day's interval in the week. The managers had tripled her original salary, and gave her two benefits in the season; an innovation first made for Mrs. Siddons, and very idly made. Comedy had now decidedly taken the ascendency. Tragedy had been worn down by endless repetition, and the taste of King, the manager, did not lead him to the buskin. There was no serious muse to invoke among us, and Mrs. Siddons was reduced to revive the feeble tragedy of "Percy," to act Elwina, when she had nothing like novelty to give us. She even verged toward comedy in her struggle for attraction, and played her original trial part of Portia, with King for Shylock; for Kemble seemed now an excrescence

in the company. There was in fact no effort made but by Mrs. Jordan, who, at the end of the season, left them for the country, to receive the homage of old friends, and the solicitations of new ones, and take the current when it served, as it was impelled by the breath of praise, and left in its course a precious deposit of pure gold for her to gather.

CHAPTER V.

In the Recess Thinks of Her Old Friends in Yorkshire — Difference of Nine Months — Odd Conjuncture — Mrs. Robinson, the Prophetess — Return to Leeds of Mrs. Jordan on the Night of That Lady's Benefit — Acts a Single Night, Now Dividing the House — Mrs. Jordan at Edinburgh — The "Belle's Stratagem" — Her Own Epilogue, Its Point — Death of Mrs. Baddeley at This Juncture — Mrs. Jordan Succeeds Mrs. Siddons at Hull and Wakefield — General Burgoyne Translates "Richard Cœur de Lion" for Drury, in 1786, and Mrs. Jordan Accepts Matilda — Death of Princess Amelia Closes the Theatres — H. R. H.'s Clock, by Tompion — The Royal Vault — A Friend of the Author's Passes the Night in It — His Feelings Compared with Juliet's Imagination — Dodsley's "Cleone," and Mrs. Siddons — "Love for Love," and the Miss Prue of Jordan — Congreve and His Preferments — Mrs. Jordan's Roxalana.

CHANGE of condition so striking was calculated to try the firmest temper. Mrs. Jordan, certainly, was no stoic, and she would at any time have disdained to affect an indifference which she did not feel. All that was woman about her anticipated her reception by the manager and the performers at Leeds, which

she had so recently quitted, and the enjoyment of the first salary of one pound, eleven shillings, and sixpence per week. She had now to consider in her carriage, on the supposition that Wilkinson might entreat her to play, with what terms she would condescend to be satisfied, now she had passed the assay in the metropolis, the metal being, to a scruple, precisely of the same value before the journey to London.

The "whirligig of time brings his revenges." Mrs. Robinson, the prophetess, had, like other false prophets, lived down her presumed wisdom. She had sneered at the expedition of Jordan, and pronounced her failure in town, and speedy wish to be again welcome at her old quarters. The London newspapers had since afforded her sufficient mortification. The first salary, two benefits, and immense presents, lavished upon a hated rival, were even at a distance barely to be endured. This unhappy lady, "whose doom reserved her to more wrath," on the 16th of June, 1786, was to take her benefit at Leeds. She was to act Horatia in the "Roman Father," which the genius of Henderson had rendered popular, though it hastened his death, and had put up the "Irish Widow" for her farce, because Mrs. Jordan had selected it for

her benefit in London. It announced as plainly as words could speak it, "Well! Leeds also has her Widow Brady, though the courtiers bear away the honours of the tournament."

On this 16th of June, a Friday! Mrs. Jordan, attended by her mother and her sister, arrived in the town of Leeds, and, after dinner, made their appearance in an upper box at the theatre. It was the benefit of the very "fright" whom poor Mrs. Bland could neither bear to hear nor see; and what I am afraid the old lady bore without much uneasiness, the house was far from being a good one. An absence of only nine months, with an audience so stationary as that of Leeds, was not likely to erase the features of Jordan from their memory, and she most certainly did not succeed if she tried to keep herself concealed. But I do not imagine for a moment that the child of nature had so much art about her. I am sure she had an honest joy in the buzz that turned every eye up to the balcony box; and, during the farce, she came down behind the scenes, and made her compliments very gracefully to her former associates in the greenroom. No people do these things so well as players — they are accustomed to assume every variety of manner, and if, like others, occa-

sionally insincere, they are never clumsy hypocrites. After having thus made herself free behind the curtain, she walked forward to the very edge of the wing, and, leaning with a fashionable air on her sister, observed the rival Widow Brady, and was fully observed by the audience herself. Tate makes himself very merry by glancing looks of defiance between the two ladies, which I dare say they were discreet enough to keep to themselves. But Tate seems to enjoy the mortification likely to be felt by Mrs. Robinson, and perhaps fancied only some contempt in the great woman because the humbler artist had disobliged him.

It was now the turn of Mrs. Jordan to be solicited, and she consented to act a single night, dividing the receipt with the manager after a deduction of fifteen pounds. To this he submitted, though he did not expect any great profit to either party; for he remembered that the Leeds people had enjoyed or neglected her for four summers in succession, and not distinguished her parting benefit by any great patronage. But the fashion had operated a mighty change in her favour, and the good gentry of Leeds now longed most passionately to see the actress of whom they

had so recently been weary. She was announced to act the Country Girl and the Romp on the 21st, and the house overflowed before the play began. The demand for places was so extraordinary that seven rows of the pit were laid into the boxes. Both play and farce, it should be observed, by her town success in the heroines, had been worn to the felt by the country hoydens; but she was no longer her mere self, but the minion of rank and taste, and London. The Siddons succeeded her upon the York circuit the month following, and Mrs. Jordan went to the north to fulfil her various engagements. At Edinburgh she ventured to speak of the only rival she could have, but it was not with Pope's humility to Bolingbroke.

> "Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
> Pursue the triumph and partake the gale?"

There seems to be a sly hint at the despotism of the turban, that bears no brother near the throne. As to Yorkshire, however, Mrs. Siddons became the absolute sovereign. The rage with which she was followed had no parallel; and if the metropolitical chair was not devoted by a *salique* law to the male sex, and it had been to

be filled by the votes of the natives, it is probable that she might have carried the election.

Mrs. Jordan took for her benefit Mrs. Cowley's "Belle's Stratagem," and after a very charming performance of Letitia Hardy, came forward to address her accomplished friends in the northern Athens. Later in life she used to hesitate in the employment of her poetical talent; now, however, in her *gaieté du cœur*, she wrote as well as spoke the following lines, which have at least one sparkling and original point, — but she became a fixed star.

"MRS. JORDAN'S ADDRESS TO THE AUDIENCE OF EDINBURGH

"*On Monday, Aug. 6, 1786.*

"Presumption 'tis, in learning's seat,
For me the Muses to entreat:
Yet, bold as the attempt may be,
I'll mount the steed of poesy;
And as my Pegasus is small,
If stumbling, I've not far to fall.

"Hear then, ye Nine! the boon I ask,
While (throwing off the comic mask)
With gratitude I here confess
How much you've heighten'd my success.

"By sealing thus my sentence now,
You've heap'd new laurels on my brow;

Nor is the Northern sprig less green
Than that which in the South was seen;
For though your sun may colder be,
Your hearts I've found as warm for me.

"One wreath I only gain'd before,
But your kind candour gives me more;
And, like your union, both combine
To make the garland brighter shine.

"'Tis true such planets sparkled here,
As made me tremble to appear,—
A twinkling star, just come in sight,
Which, tow'rds the Pole, might give no light!

"Melpomene has made such work,
Reigning despotic like the Turk,
I fear'd Thalia had no chance
Her laughing standard to advance:
But yet, her youngest ensign, I
Took courage, was resolv'd to try,
And stand the hazard of the die.

"Since then the vent'rous game I've tried,
With Nature only for my guide;
The bets, if fairly won, I'll take,
Nor wish to make it my last stake."

The good people at Edinburgh, we thus see, permitted Mrs. Jordan to show her own wit. But those of Glasgow, when it came to their turn to welcome the great actress, presented her with a

gold medal, and an inscription not badly turned. It was transmitted with a single line of admiration and jealousy.

"*To Mrs. Jordan.*

"MADAM: — Accept this trifle from the Glasgow audience, who are as great admirers of genius as the critics of Edinburgh."

On one side of the medal is the Glasgow arms, which are a tree, etc.; on the other side a feather, with the following inscription: —

"Bays from our tree you could not gather,
No branch of it deserves that name;
So take it all, call it a feather,
And place it in your cap of fame."

While this charming woman was on her way to Edinburgh, rejoicing in her strength, the scene closed on the unfortunate Mrs. Baddeley, at her lodgings there in Shakespeare Square, on the 1st of July. She had originally appeared in Ophelia, and Mr. Garrick, whose judgment in his own art will not be questioned, pronounced her delightful. She communicated a charm to the "adorable Fanny" in the "Clandestine Marriage," and Zoffani painted her, with King and her husband,

in that play, at the command of George III. They who now look at the words and the music of the "Jubilee" may exhibit a smile of incredulity to hear that the ballad of "Sweet Willy O," as given by her, was irresistible, and drew crowds to the theatre. But with whatever charms of beauty or pathos she was graced, she was self-devoted to poverty and disease. Extraordinary beauty on the stage commonly seals the fate of the victim: the moral restraints there are worn so slightly that they drop at the breath of adulation, and the public amusement becomes the public prey. Disappointments now awaken an unavailing regret; reflection must be silenced by some anodyne, or distraction ensues; but the temporary friend soon changes his character, and consummates the misery he was called in to avert.

Mrs. Baddeley died in her forty-second year. I have a little anticipated this close when speaking of her at York, on the first appearance there of Mrs. Jordan; but in the order of time, it came again before me, with her own idea strongly impressed upon my memory, and I have dismissed her with tender pity for her fate, and gratitude for the pleasure derived in my youth from her

talents. Returning to her engagement at Drury Lane, Mrs. Jordan was invited to try at least to dispel some of the gloom with which the tragic queen had covered the land; the "laughing standard" might be reared by her, but was then certainly not followed. The receipts at Hull and Wakefield were mere apologies for the inhabitants, who generally were too much distressed to go abroad on trivial occasions. In this position the gay actress thought ardently of the capital, where no such disparity in their attractions existed, and where her merits were appreciated by all ranks.

Upon her arrival, she did not discover any very great preparation of the manager for a brilliant season. General Burgoyne, on the success of his "Heiress," might reasonably continue his dramatic pursuits; and the vast popularity of Sedaine's "Richard Cœur de Lion," in Paris, graced, or rather informed by the divine music of Grétry, set both of our theatres to work to prepare it for the English stage. Macnally undertook it for Mr. Harris, and Burgoyne for Sheridan. The latter, with great happiness, introduced Richard's queen in the situation of Blondel, and Mrs. Jordan accepted the part of Matilda, while the majestic figure of Kemble was seen by the audience taking

his melancholy exercise in the prison of Leopold, Duke of Austria, whose resentment of an insult offered to him by Richard, at the siege of Acre, led him to load his unhappy captive with irons, and demand an enormous sum for his ransom. Perhaps no production ever had more effect than the Richard of Drury Lane; and so fascinating was its ensemble, that no alteration made afterward in the cast was felt otherwise than as an injury, and more voice or more science in the principals only told the opera intruders that there was a truth and a grace beyond their reach, and that if you did not touch the heart here, you did nothing.[1]

This entertainment was brought out on the 24th of October, after the "Winter's Tale," and was repeated every evening, till the 1st of November, when the two theatres were closed, on account of the death of the king's aunt, the Princess Amelia. The etiquette of that period kept the people without amusement, and the actors without bread, twelve days; an intolerable grievance, and totally

[1] "'Tis not the enfeebled thrill, or warbled shake,
The heart can strengthen, or the soul awake!
But where the force of energy is found,
When the sense rises on the wings of sound."
— *Collins*, p. 96.

uncalled for. In some cases of royal demise, when a prince, the hope of succession, in the flower of his age, is cut off, the public suffer, and the willing respect paid to the reigning family is accompanied by a personal grief, almost uniformly felt; but even then, all privation as to income should be prevented: they who are not allowed to work for themselves should be compensated by the state. The humanity and real wisdom of the present reign has abridged the interval as much as possible, and marked the respect with any character rather than sufferance.

The princess had left a very considerable sum, indeed, with reversions of annuities, a splendid fortune, to Prince Charles Hesse. But as she mentioned nothing of mourning to her household, a petition, in form, was presented to Lord Besborough. That nobleman thought the request fit to be indulged, but he was opposed in it. What notion he might entertain of the illustrious legatee, I cannot say, but he declared that if the prince refused to discharge the bills, he would pay the expense out of his own pocket. The princess herself displayed great affection, and very minute attention, to all the individuals of her establishment, from the ladies of her bedchamber and the

two Ladies Waldegrave, to whom thousands were given, down to the menial servants of her stables and her kitchen, to whom a year's wages were bequeathed. She had forgotten a few old pensioners upon her bounty, retired from her service, or who had suffered by casualty; but there could be no difficulty in the legatee's decision that her Royal Highness intended to support them for their lives rather than her own, and bequeathed as much of her mind along with her money, as could transmigrate to her favoured relation.

The royal family has been remarked for a singular attention to the distribution of time. I should like to know the present state of the curious clock, the masterpiece of Tompion, on which he put the price of £600, when he made it for the Duke of Cumberland, from whom it came to his sister Amelia.

On Saturday, November 11th, her Royal Highness being what was called privately interred in the royal vault of King Henry the Seventh's chapel, at Westminster, the theatres opened again on the Monday following.

Before we suffer the royal vault, however, to close upon the Princess Amelia, we claim the privilege of age, to tell an actual occurrence which

happened to a particular friend. While the workmen were busy in preparing for the interment, which was soon to take place, a gentleman, from curiosity, had procured a taper, and gone down into this venerable cemetery. His design was to let "contemplation," as Milton says, "have her fill," while, at intervals, he carefully copied in his note-book some of the inscriptions upon the splendid coffins around him. Time had passed away unheeded by the antiquary, and night had been closing fast upon one of the brief days of November. His eye, at length, was caught by some person moving at a distance in the vault; by his taper he saw a fellow, in the coat of a soldier, attempting to wrench away a silver plate from one of the coffins. He called out, in an angry tone, to the man, who ran away in fear of being punished for the robbery he had intended. Our friend thought it better, not to pursue the wretch, but composing his nerves a little, sat down to copy the inscription which is placed upon the coffin of the Duke of Cumberland; while thus engaged, the trap-door of the vault fell over his head, at a distance, and, in a short time, all his sensibility was roused by hearing the outer gate of the abbey itself ring upon its hinges, the bolts secured, and

the key turning in the wards of the lock. His first impression was that he had a long night to pass among the dead; his wasting taper now began to tell him that he would soon, moreover, be in total darkness. Horror, in spite of philosophy, was creeping fast upon his aching sense, and at length the last glimmer expired, and he sat, motionless, in the gloomy silence of the grave. He became incapable of thought; he was breathing a heavy and noisome atmosphere, the night was chill and damp, but he remained through it in a waking stupor, a sort of living death, as it respected either memory or reason. When, at last, the vault was opened, and daylight visited the aperture, he made his way carefully to the steps, and passed up them and through the cathedral, inattentive to all the objects about him. By a kind of instinct, he took the way to his own house in a distant part of the town. But the fancy had been too much excited for safety, and an alarming fever succeeded the adventure, from which the friendly skill of Doctor Austen, in about six weeks, recovered him. He was a very intimate friend of Henderson's, and told me the story himself. It is impossible not to remember the almost parallel situation of Juliet, in the monument of the Capu-

lets, and a finer passage cannot be found in the descriptive poetry of any nation. In order to keep our great poet's philosophy safe from objection in the comparison, it will be remembered that the perceived gradations settle in stupor, and that the sudden shock causes distraction.

"How, if when I'm laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Comes to redeem me? — there's a fearful point!
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in?
Or if I live, is it not very like,
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place, —
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
Where, for these many hundred years, the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are packt;
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
Lies festering in his shroud; where, as they say,
At some hours in the night spirits resort —
Alack! alack! shall I not be distraught,
Invironed with all these hideous fears;
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud?
And in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?"

I know that, removed from the scene, and fairly estimating the danger, the reason of man can confine itself to the merely disagreeable in the pic-

ture; but the uncertainty as to one portion of ourselves, the ignorance of the nursery, and the condition of our nerves, would keep the bravest of us, I believe, from coveting such an experiment.

Among the efforts made to keep up the attraction of tragedy at Drury Lane Theatre, was the revival of Dodsley's "Cleone" for Mrs. Siddons. She could support it only two nights, but the critics assigned a wonderful reason indeed for its failure, namely, "that the refined feelings of the present times affect to revolt at tragedies where insipidity does not prevail." Surely it was not by their insipidity that Isabella and Shore and Calista and Belvidera had been rendered of late so popular among us. A better reason might be, that it was truly distressing to see Mrs. Siddons in the agonies of Cleone only a little month before her own confinement. If there be anything whatever in stage exertion, Cleone was quite enough, one would think, to destroy her. Or were the very boards of Garrick's theatre bound to confirm his judgment of the play in question, which he originally refused?

Mrs. Jordan was more fortunate than her great rival: the getting up of "Love for Love"

afforded her, in Miss Prue, a character exactly suitable to her style of acting, and which kept its hold upon the public mind. The first scene, where she enters with Tattle to Mrs. Foresight and her sister, was inimitably natural. The scents, of which the beau had been so liberal; the half check upon the too plain words which she blurted out with gay simplicity; and afterward the apt scholar and the catechism of love, and the confirmation of its doctrines, were rich comedy indeed, for she had genius enough to keep it from offending. The courtship with Ben, with the sweet savours of Tattle all the time in her nostrils, afforded a striking contrast; the sullen aversion of her look, the "I ain't deaf," with her skilful utterance of the word, the consolatory "I'm too big to be whipped," her abuse of the "sea calf," and the "tar barrel," and the passion of tears, were all truth itself. Miss Prue has only one more scene, the first of the fifth act, where she exclaims, with indignation, "What! must I go to bed to nurse again, and be a child as long as she's an old woman? Indeed, but I won't." The last word, as she contrived to utter it, and the "Fiddle of a rod! I'll have a husband," with the hint as to "Robin the butler," naturally

enough produce the locking up of the young lady, whom the author unfortunately has left under lock and key, and neither involved in the catastrophe nor called in at the conclusion of the play.

Notwithstanding the eternal wit of Congreve's comedies, which is not approached even by Sheridan, it is not true that they have no real character. The present play abounds in characters admirably discriminated and preserved. Foresight and Sir Sampson Legend are perfectly in nature. So is Ben, though the lingo of the forecastle may vary from time to time; but he has the true mind of a sailor, and "another trip" is his only remedy for disappointment. A sailor, too, always uses the terms of his profession, to which he is more heartily attached than any other man, and, among his oddities, is more metaphorical in his brief vocabulary than all the rhetoricians or even poets of the community.

"Love for Love" was first acted on the night of opening of the new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Hamlet considered himself entitled to a whole share among the players, for a few lines inserted into the play before his uncle. Congreve received that compliment on writing "Love for

Love:" a whole share in the concern, for a single play per year. It is fatal to withdraw from an author the stimulus of necessity; the author of four such comedies as Congreve's could easily persuade himself that he had done enough for fame. Plunging a wit into the pipe-office, or making him a licenser of either coaches or wine, is like marrying an actress, and taking her from the stage; the parties are no better than others in the new situations; to extend their attraction, and therefore happiness, they should be left to exert their genius in its proper sphere. To reward utility, without abridging it, is a problem of difficult solution. We may be apt to think such a poet disgraced by his preferments. Congreve, however, did not wish to be considered as an author, yet it is only as an author that he enjoys a name among the illustrious of his country.

Doctor Johnson has said of Congreve, "that he was an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot, nor the manner of his dialogue." A mind so perspicacious as the doctor's, had he been acquainted with the writings of Ben Jonson, could not have failed to discern innumerable points of similitude between them as to the personages of the drama, and the manner of the

dialogue. The great Lord Camden was fond of displaying them.

On the 15th of February, Mrs. Jordan assumed the character of Roxalana, in the "Sultan," for the first time. She had, like Mrs. Abington, skill enough to keep such a trifle as this from becoming contemptible. On the 12th of March, Mr. Holcroft produced at Drury Lane a new comedy called "Seduction," but he made no use of the talents of Mrs. Jordan. Like Mrs. Siddons herself, she seems to have been considered as devoted to the writings only of men of genius.

CHAPTER VI.

King's Management — Mrs. Jordan in the Summer of 1787 — Miss Farren, Too, in Yorkshire, Distinguishes Fawcett, Since a Truly Original Actor — Kemble Alters the "Pilgrim" for Mrs. Jordan — Her Juletta — The Character Describes Itself — Beautiful Passages — Madness Exhibited Frequently on the Stage — "The New Peerage" — Old Macklin Remembered When He Had Forgotten Shylock — Interesting Appeal of the Veteran — New Plays by Miss Lee and Captain Jephson — Smith Did Not Act Much with Mrs. Jordan — His Last Benefit — Anecdote of Him when at Eton — His Intimacy with Garrick — His Comedy — Lewis and Bensley Compared with Him as Gentlemen — Abington and Farren — Palmer Returns to His Viola — Mrs. Jordan's Sir Harry Wildair — Theatrical Politics — King's Abdication.

IT must be admitted that no theatre ever displayed so little management as that of Drury under King, from the time of Mrs. Jordan's first appearance. He had received two such accessions as no other period is ever likely to produce, and he contented himself with wearing them down. The stock plays of a theatre are excellent things, we know, but an endless repetition of them will thin the most judicious audiences. Nothing could be done for Mrs. Sid-

dons, as to original composition; and for Jordan, whose sphere was less poetical (though within the limits of Viola and the Country Girl there was all the comic world of delicate feeling, poignant humour, and youthful simplicity), nothing was attempted. I dare say Sheridan, in his visionary schemes, meditated to write for her; and the reverence at the playhouse for his powers might tend to discourage those who, humbler in their pretensions, were more certain in their performances. The politics, too, that really engrossed the great wit, sometimes were adverse to the humbler. Burgoyne was of the Whig party; and Holcroft, however occasionally beyond their standard, was at all times in opposition. The theatre was never really and truly thrown open to such talent as there was among us. Sheridan would undertake everything, and do nothing. There was a committee of proprietors, who only attended to the economy of the wardrobe, and they could not be tempted by all the eloquence of Tom King to venture the smallest outlay without the consent of Mr. Sheridan, who was always too busy either to give it or refuse it. Thus it was that Harris, at the other house, beat them, with all the cards absolutely in their hands.

The northern circuit, during the summer of 1787, again attracted Mrs. Jordan, and her three nights at Leeds were brilliantly attended; she acted Rosalind with Roxalana, Hypolita with Miss Lucy, Viola with Miss Hoyden. His Grace, the Duke of Norfolk, her early patron and steady friend, supported her nobly on the night of her benefit. She could not stay longer with Tate Wilkinson, but assured him that her successor from Drury Lane, Miss Barnes, was a diamond of the first water. That lady made her first impression in Juliet to the Romeo of Mr. Fawcett; but the expression of the garden scene, "Hist! Romeo, Hist!" was a piece of information as well as a signal, for the audience literally hissed the young Juliet to a degree that precluded any repetition of the offence. Tate always considered Mrs. Jordan to have amused herself on the above occasion, for she was not easily deceived as to the requisites for her profession. Miss Barnes, thus forced from her Romeo Fawcett, married out of the house of Montague, and in private life remained inoffensive and respectable. Leaving our sportive mischief to her harvest in Scotland, she was not likely to hear with indifference that her comic competitor, Miss Farren, who

rarely stirred from London, had this summer Colman's permission to play for the benefit of her sister Margaret, afterward Mrs. Knight. She achieved the great distinction of three rows of the pit laid into the boxes, and for the good people of Yorkshire, at York and Hull, acted Lady Paragon, Lady Townley, Lady Teazle, Mrs. Oakley, Widow Belmour, Charlotte, in the "Hypocrite," Mrs. Sullen, and Violante; attended in afterpieces by her Maria in the "Citizen," Miss Tittup in "Bon Ton," and a character in which she always delighted me, Emmeline, in Dryden's "Masque of King Arthur."

The chain of cause and effect has its striking exemplification upon the real life of the stage. Miss Farren's Violante absolutely tended to direct our excellent Fawcett to the right course for him as an actor. He was so disposed himself to tragedy, that when he could be moved to personate the fine gentlemen in comedy, they were usually a very serious business, of more weight than brightness. But he was, on the night of her Violante, induced to accept Colonel Britton, with, I believe, a preference for Don Felix, and the great actress pronounced him a very promising young actor. Thus his comic impression

gained strength. He played Peeping Tom for his benefit at Hull, so as to astonish those who had seen his tragedy, and at last he became a great, original, masterly comedian, always natural and extremely powerful. He has recently retired from the stage into private life; what he was as an actor may be estimated with great accuracy by seeing Harley of Drury Lane Theatre. It has been said that Jones reminds us of Lewis, and it was truly said: he is a translation into a less brilliant language, yet accurately rendered; but as tō Fawcett, Harley is not only like, but the same thing as though the veteran had been driven back upon his early days with all the confidence and vigour of his maturity anticipated. This must be understood of the bustle about both. Whether, at a distant time, Harley may ever equal his predecessor in characters of advanced life and rustic, or, at any rate, not refined feeling, remains a question. His buoyancy is everything at present. The modern rage for music demands that our comic men should have much of the Italian buffo, and it has introduced a sort of rigmarole extravaganza of little meaning but amazing rapidity. Mr. Fawcett's second wife was an expert musician, and she disciplined him admirably on

these occasions, though his own father was a singer and a pupil of Tom Arne's.

The winter season of 1787–88 had the advantage of Kemble's studies, and they led him to a character that seemed expressly contrived for Mrs. Jordan — that of Juletta in the "Pilgrim" of Fletcher. That the fable is somewhat fantastic will be readily admitted, but at the same time it must be confessed that the incidents are singularly entertaining. The author makes Juletta delineate herself, and the passage will show the great variety with which he had decorated his favourite character, and the scope it afforded to the infinite humour of Mrs. Jordan.

"*Jul.* I am a little footboy,
That walk o' nights, and fright old gentlemen;
Make 'em lose hats and cloaks.
Alph. And horses too.
Jul. Sometimes I do, sir, teach 'em the way through ditches,
And how to break their worships' shins and noses,
Against old broken stiles and stumps.
Alph. A fine art!
I feel it in my bones yet.
Jul. I'm a drum, sir —
A drum at midnight; ran, tan, tan, tan, tan, sir!
Do you take me for Juletta? — I'm a page, sir,
That brought a letter from the Duke of Medina,

To have one Signor Alphonso (just such another
As your old worship) worm'd for running mad, sir;
Alas! you are mistaken.
Alph. Thou'rt the devil.
And so thou hast us'd me.
Jul. I am anything.
An old woman, that tells fortunes — frights good people,
And sends them to Segovia, for their [souls' sake].
I am strange airs, and excellent sweet voices;
I'm anything to do my mistress good, believe me.
She now recover'd, and her wishes crown'd,
I am Juletta again. Pray, sir, forgive me."

Perhaps this will be thought the finest *vivâ voce* delineation of a character existing. Ben Jonson has a similar exposition in his "Brain-worm;" but I always thought the boast of "Every Man in His Humour" heavy and barely credible. Juletta is as light as Ariel, and as sportive as Puck.

The soul of the poet Fletcher was exquisitely tempered, and he has even a woman's fondness for the tender virtues. Among them he touches fidelity with a peculiar fondness. The reader should refer to the passage where Bellario is questioned as to Arethusa, in "Philaster." There is a beautiful counterpart in this character of Juletta, which, equally firm as to the main point of trust, breaks away into a strain of comic sarcasm, that

lost nothing in coming through the melodious organ of Mrs. Jordan.

"*Jul.* If I did know, and her trust lay upon me,
Not all your angers, nor your flatteries,
Should make me speak; but having no more interest
Than I may well deliver to the air,
I'll tell you what I know, and tell it liberally;
I think she's gone, because we cannot find her;
I think she's weary of your tyranny,
And therefore gone; maybe she is in love;
Maybe in love where you show no great liking:
And therefore gone."

These old comedies, it is true, needed a good deal of weeding, but Kemble, after Vanbrugh, had left the "Pilgrim" pure enough in all conscience. The charm of their easy verse, so near the cadence of good conversation, so pointed, and yet so musical, will always plead for their revival, as much for the language as the invention and character with which they abound. A fashion obtained in the time of Fletcher, of which humanity then did not feel ashamed — I allude to the practice of exposing what should be the sacred mysteries of madness to the derision of a public audience. The inside of a bedlam, in a variety of tragedies and comedies, was emptied out upon the stage, and, I fear, afforded a thoughtless enjoy-

ment, unmixed with the just horror which belongs to such a profanation. Creatures of all conditions, in all the fantastic disarray of their disturbed senses, succeeded each other upon the stage, or entered into contests of delusion and prejudice with each other in a crowd —

> "Whilst they, so perfect is their misery,
> Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
> But boast themselves more comely than before."
>
> — *Comus.*

The "Pilgrim" has some scenes of this kind; but the most powerful are those which, with a full knowledge of their tendency, the ingenious cruelty of her brothers assembles before the Duchess of Malfy, the great masterwork of Webster, a tragic writer equal to everything but Shakespeare.

Again we had a new comedy from the pen of Harriet Lee, which appeared on the 10th of November, and Mrs. Jordan had no part assigned to her; it was called "The New Peerage; or, Our Eyes May Deceive Us." King and Miss Farren had all that was striking in it. Mrs. Crouch, having spoke herself into favour in the "Heiress," had another miss allotted her, called Sophia Harley. The "New Peerage" has long since disap-

peared, and, perhaps, does not merit to take rank among the established nobility of the drama.

The great excellence of the veteran, Macklin, drew considerable audiences whenever he appeared at Covent Garden Theatre, and he had been announced to perform his own Shylock on the 10th of January, 1788, at the extraordinary age of eighty-nine. I went there to compare his performance with that of my friend Henderson, whose loss I even still regret, and, with some anxiety and much veneration, secured a station in the pit, which none but the young should scuffle about, for it was much contested. You just saw the foot of the actor, and thus had his full expression and whole figure bearing upon your eye; and I most seriously assure the modish frequenter of the side-boxes or stage-box, that if he never occupied that station he never saw what was delicate and exact and discriminative, and I was going to add sublime, in acting. There, and thus anxiously, Garrick had been watched even to agony; and in Shylock, at least, and Sir Pertinax, Macklin was a Garrick. It was a little before my personal introduction to Macklin, but I would not, at that time, miss a repetition of his triumph in the Jew. Who would not decorate the chambers of

memory with portraits thus painted by the great masters, in living colours and all the truth of nature?

Macklin got through the first act with spirit and vigour, and, except to a very verbal critic, without material imperfection. In the second he became confused, and sensible of his confusion. With his usual manliness, and waiting for no admonition from others, he advanced to the front of the stage, and with a solemnity in his manner that became extremely touching, thus addressed his audience:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: Within these very few hours, I have been seized with a terror of mind I never in my life felt before; it has totally destroyed my corporeal as well as mental faculties. I must, therefore, request your patience this night — a request which an old man of eighty-nine years of age may hope is not unreasonable. Should it be granted, unless my health shall be entirely reëstablished, you may depend upon it, this will be the last night of my ever appearing before you in so ridiculous a situation."

Thus dignified, even in his wreck, was that great man, whom Pope had immortalised by a compliment, and whose humanity Lord Mansfield

had pronounced to be at least equal to his skill as an actor. He recovered with the generous applause of the audience, and got through the play by great attention from the prompter and his assistant. It was now said that Leveredge had sung upon the stage at the still greater age of ninety-six, an effort, though unusual, not exciting much surprise. Music is of easy recollection: tunes may be said to haunt the memory, and the first bar leads through the whole melody with great accuracy; but a thousand lines of pointed verse, intersected with cues, and accompanied with stage business, with passions to be assumed, and interest to be enforced, may, at times, startle the coolest brain, and agitate the most practised speaker.

Among reasonable expectations it might have been presumed that a new tragedy, by Jephson, would have aided, or been aided by, the great tragic strength of Drury Lane Theatre; but it was cut short in the commencement of its career by Kemble's illness, and, the next season, was never heard of until the 11th of December, when Wroughton supported the character which Palmer had given up for his royalty management. The injury done to this beautiful effort, by interrup-

tions of many kinds, required a philosophy at least on a par with the author's poetry.

Although Smith had the full merit of bringing Mrs. Jordan to Drury Lane Theatre, and enjoyed her popularity for a variety of reasons, he yet, as an actor, was not in the least strengthened by her talents — they did not act in the same pieces. There can be no doubt that Smith's retirement was hastened by the predominance of Mrs. Siddons and her brother. The usage of the theatre did not allow such an actor as Smith to be divested of the business he had been engaged to sustain; and Mr. Kemble had at least calmness enough not to express any impatience for the tragic sceptre, which he was sure to receive at no distant day.

On the 10th of March, 1788, Smith took his last benefit, and himself acted Macbeth to the Lady of Mrs. Siddons, Kemble performing Macduff, and despatching his great rival from the mimic world. He spoke an address, in which he announced his retirement to a country life and the sports of the field and the turf, to which he had through life been always strongly addicted. The habit of acting in our great towns during the race weeks has given to our actors, pretty generally, a love for the course, and many of them

pique themselves upon never missing such things. Kemble is the only great actor who never talked to me of a "gallop after the hounds," and it was not till late in life that he became a horseman.

There was "further compliment of leave-taking" between Smith and the public, on the 10th of June, when he acted the last time for the property. He had been five and thirty years before the town, and had kept up a friendly intercourse with Garrick, whom he sometimes irritated, always reverenced, and constantly studied. They both loved money, and disputed, even to separation, about pounds or guineas, in the weekly salary. Smith had been educated at college,[1] and lived in the best society; his correspondence with his great master is frequently graced by quotations from Ovid and Virgil, and Catullus and Mrs. Hartley concur in reminding the manager of his own

[1] While Smith was at Eton, Doctor Sumner came suddenly upon the scholars at their play, and the troop took flight, calling out, "Away! here's Sumner." Smith not choosing to run, was thus addressed by the doctor: "Is that a proper mode of mentioning me? 'Here's Sumner coming!' Surely, it became you to say Doctor Sumner." Smith, very submissively, disclaimed the remotest notion of disrespect, and added, as a scholar, the classical vindication of the abruptness complained of. "When the Romans saw Cæsar approaching, they did not say, Here comes Imperator Cæsar, but, Cæsar comes."

attachment to Mrs. Woffington. He would often beg from Mr. Garrick an hour's attention to his rehearsals, but I never could see that he had profited by the teacher, for his tragedy was uniformly hard and unvaried, whereas the very vital principle of Roscius was point, and he could no more endure a character set to one tune, than he could hear the slightest inattention to the stage business. Smith's heroes in tragedy all, more or less, reminded you of Bajazet — it was the tyrant's vein that he breathed; he looked upon tragedy to be something abstract, to which all character has to bend; so that he had but one manner for Richard and Hamlet. But his nerve and gentlemanly bearing carried him through a world of emotion without exciting a tear, and you were some way satisfied, though "not much moved." In comedy his manliness was the chief feature, yet it was combined with pleasantry so perfectly well-bred that I am unable to name any other actors who have approached him. If they had the pleasantry, they wanted the manliness; where there was man enough about them, either the pleasantry was wanting, or the manliness checked the pleasantry. Lewis had the pleasantry, but carried to riot, and the manliness, though swelling

up to the braggart. Bensley and Aikin were both manly, but for pleasantry, alas! it became satire in passing their lips. I never laughed with Bensley but once, and then he represented Malvolio, in which I thought him perfection. Bensley had been a soldier, yet his stage walk eternally reminded you of the "one, two, three, hop," of the dancing-master; this scientific progress of legs, in yellow stockings, most villainously cross-gartered, with a horrible laugh of ugly conceit to top the whole, rendered him Shakespeare's Malvolio at all points.

Mrs. Jordan had now an opportunity of seeing at Covent Garden the great actress of her early days in Ireland, to whom her mother had acted the first Constantia in the "Chances," and whom the best judges had pronounced to be the greatest mistress of her art. But the only fine lady of comedy was now grown lusty, and her humour, like the gaiety of the mature at a festival, was endured, rather than enjoyed, because there had been a day when it was more suited to the person. The Romp saw, however, what the style had been in its meridian, and that it by no means suited her own powers; nature had done at least as much for one as art had done for the other;

and who, beside, was ever great by imitation? Yet she thought she saw enough, if she herself should ever assume the fashionable fair, to keep her quite clear of the mincing manner of Miss Farren, who, in Lady Teazle, was absolutely made to laugh at her own mode of utterance; in other words, exemplify the ridicule by the natural manner as much as the mimicry.

The business of the Royalty Theatre having been settled by the interest of the winter patentees, Mrs. Jordan was benefited in her Viola by the return of the penitent Palmer to Drury and Sir Toby. I have, in "The Life of Kemble," told the tale of his "insidious humility," and, therefore, will not repeat it here, but barely state that, on the meeting between Sheridan and himself, Palmer addressed him so exactly in the style of Joseph Surface, that the witty author stopped him by exclaiming, "Why, Jack, you forget I wrote it." Satisfied with his joke, he added three pounds per week to the salary of the wanderer. As far as the public is concerned, patent rights are justifiable, when, by the engagement of responsible persons, they produce a perfect and becoming amusement for the world about them. But whenever new worlds start up at a great dis-

tance, they have an equal right to be amused, and within their own neighbourhoods. The population should be the measure, and not the patentees.

It was on Friday, the 2d of May, 1788, that Mrs. Jordan, for her own benefit, challenged the fame of Mrs. Woffington, in the unequalled gaiety of Farquhar's Sir Harry Wildair. When Cibber wrote his sprightly comedy of "She Would and She Would Not," in the year 1703, he made his Hypolita assume the male disguise, and be as like as he could make her to Sir Harry Wildair, in the "Constant Couple," which had appeared at the same theatre, Drury Lane, three years before. The character of Sir Harry has the advantage in point of dialogue. The talent of Farquhar for comedy was astonishing. The timidity which forbade him to act himself never moderated in the least his conceptions for others, and he placed his actors, at every step they took, upon the very verge of danger. Wilks was the original performer of this jubilee of youthful fashion; and it requires the very highest captivations to render it bearable. When Woffington took it up, she did what she was not aware of, namely, that the audience permitted the actress to purify the character, and enjoyed the language from a woman, which

might have disgusted from a man speaking before women — as I have heard spoiled children commended for what would, a few years after, shut them out of the room if they ventured so far. No, Mrs. Woffington, in spite of Quin's joke, upon your supposing that "half the house took you for a man," I am convinced that no creature there supposed it for a moment: it was the travesty, seen throughout, that really constituted the charm of your performance, and rendered it not only gay, but innocent. And thus it was with Mrs. Jordan, who, however beautiful in her figure, stood confessed a perfect and decided woman, and courted, and intrigued, and quarrelled, and cudgelled in whimsical imitation of the ruder man.

I remember her well on this night of laughter, charmingly dressed, and provokingly at ease in situations which, unaided by wine, few men view without embarrassment. Accordingly, no doubt, either Wilks or Lewis was the more perfect representative of Wildair; but neither of them afforded such delight as the two female rakes, who were loved for their own sakes, while laughed at for ours. I need only notice the shouts of applause that followed Mrs. Jordan's dilemma, and exit in the fifth act.

"Here I am brought to a very pretty dilemma. I must commit murder, or commit matrimony; which is the best now? a license from Doctors Commons, or a sentence from the Old Bailey? — If I kill my man, the law hangs me; if I marry my woman, I shall hang myself — but, damn it, cowards dare fight; I'll marry, that's the most daring action of the two. [*Exit.*"

There was something in Mrs. Jordan which was fairly unaccountable. She was nervous in the theatre, and even at the wing before she came on; once before the audience, she could do anything. As the leading male of the comedy, at its close she resolved to do all the honours. She stepped before the curtain to the lamps, and gave out the play for the next night; she then announced, with great impression, the play of "All for Love," for the Monday, and with deliberate respect pronounced the words, "being for the benefit of Mistress Siddons." It took the audience by surprise; but they felt the kindness soon, and applauded it, when, without making Peggy's mistake in her male attire, she bowed profoundly, and hurried up to her dressing-room, to prepare for Matilda, in "Richard Cœur de Lion."

Before we are called away from the "Constant Couple," it may be proper to notice the remark of

Steele in the *Tatler* upon its dialogue. It occurs in No. 19 of those papers.

"This performance is the greatest instance we can have of the irresistible force of proper action. The dialogue in itself has something too low to bear a criticism upon it; but Mr. Wilks enters into the part with so much skill, that the gallantry, the youth, and gaiety of a young man of plentiful fortune is looked upon with as much indulgence on the stage as in real life, without any of those intermixtures of wit and humour which usually prepossess us in favour of such characters in other plays."

The above passage is a proof how inconsiderately men of genius sometimes write, to serve a particular purpose. Here Wilks was to carry the whole play upon his back, and the creator of the character he acted was to be a nullity in his own work. "The dialogue in itself has something too low to bear criticism." It is the language, however, the only language, by which Wilks was to convey the gallantry, and gaiety, which we will admit sat admirably well upon that graceful man. The dialogue low, indeed! All the characters are not Bevils, but they have conversation language suited to their qualities and purposes. "Bear

criticism!" Did Steele read what he has written? What did his friend Addison think of the slip-slop which follows? "The gallantry, the youth, and gaiety of a young man," and these qualities "is looked upon," and "Mr. Wilks enters into the part." What part? and how far are we to try back for the antecedent? But all this is carelessness, it will be said. The critic who is unjust in his censures should at least be correct in his language. "Without intermixtures of wit and humour" the play may be; for these are not infusions into the composition, but the characteristics of it. To quote instances would be to transcribe whole scenes.

I am unacquainted with a writer of domestic comedy entitled to higher praise than Farquhar may claim from his countrymen, and even now, do but act his plays with the respectable talent that still may be collected among us, and Congreve himself, in spite of his elaborate wit, will have no chance with him.

Mrs. Jordan did not, in the mode of great actresses, desert the theatre the moment she had secured her benefit; she acted with them in both play and farce, on the 13th of June, the last night of the season.

The king, accompanied by his family, this summer paid a visit to Cheltenham. He very frequently rode out in the wet, and probably here originated that tendency to fever that was soon after to alarm the nation, and originate the question as to the regency, so furiously contested, and so triumphantly carried by Mr. Pitt.

Mrs. Jordan arrived there during the stay of their Majesties, and was hardly less welcome to her host of admirers at Cheltenham. In the recess I shall examine how our great comedian was likely to be affected by the schism in Drury Lane Theatre. As far as she could feel interested about the management, it may be supposed that her wishes pointed to a comic rather than a serious management of the concern; but King, from long habit, was more attached to Miss Farren than herself; and, indeed, her performance of the fine lady, however inferior, critically speaking, to what Mrs. Abington had been, was both nearer to the fashionable woman of her day, and greatly superior to anything that could be found in either town or country. Lord Derby and the party, too, supported her with no barren admiration, and she might, therefore, be an object of particular favour with the manager, from interest as well as habit,

perhaps also preference. The style of King was always hard, precise, and pointed; he converted everything into epigram, and certainly never himself yielded to luxuriant fancy, in the manner of Jordan, one of whose laughs would disconcert the most laboured efforts of sententious delivery. The old school, as they called themselves, kept together by choice; for Bannister, in fact, as little resembled them as Jordan, and she would have been better with the comic actors, of whom Munden was the head, than any other, as sharing with her in the full flow of voluptuous humour.

Mrs. Jordan would be likely now to know some of the secrets of the prison house. She saw that the retirement of Smith strengthened Mr. Kemble so materially that the concern mainly depended upon him; and the patentees might secretly smile at the petulance of King, who attached too much importance to his ministry, and might have been satisfied with the mere stage-management, which, in truth, was the extent of his competence. They bore with his threats of abdication through the summer, sounding Mr. Kemble as to the power that he would expect in the situation, if he accepted it, and the recess passed away in talking idly, and doing nothing for the ensuing season.

At length King, seeing that the die was cast, chose to desert the standard and appeal to the public; a very unwise measure, and intended to do mischief. The newspapers had got their lesson, and, on the hint from the property, attacked King, then at the distance of two hundred miles from London. They affected to regret his loss as an actor, but as a manager they thought neither the proprietors nor the public could lament his absence. He turns these points very neatly in his favour, by a reply such as he used of old to venture to his friend Garrick, when they differed.

"This paragraph," he writes, "I cannot but consider as highly complimentary; for it gives me positive commendation in the line I undertook to fill, and only obliquely censures me for not making the most of a character with which I have never been entrusted."

The newspapers boldly accused him of demanding, beyond his salary, a thousand pounds a year for managing for the seven next years. King gets rid of this by saying that "the quantum of money had never been an object of dispute." His complaints, he affirms, rested chiefly on the undefined office in which he had found himself, which sub-

jected him to be called to account by authors for not acting pieces which he had never heard of; for not encouraging performers with whom he had no power to treat; and for the want of novelty which it was no part of his province to provide. He becomes pleasant as he proceeds: "Should any one, upon hearing this, ask me 'what was my post at Drury Lane, and, if I was not manager, who was?' I should be forced to answer, like my friend Atall in the comedy, to the first, I don't know, and to the last, I can't tell; I can only once more positively assert that I was not manager; for I had not the power by any agreement, nor, indeed, had I the wish, to approve or reject any new dramatic work; the liberty of engaging, encouraging, or discharging any one performer, nor sufficient authority to command the cleaning of a coat, or adding, by way of decoration, a yard of copper lace, both of which, it must be allowed, were often much wanted."

This explanation of King's produced some effect. Kemble being announced as manager, the town friends of King attacked him for accepting the trust upon humiliating conditions. Kemble was, to be sure, the last man in the

world to be suspected of doing so; for he certainly felt his own value, and at all times firmly asserted it. Though the writer of the accusation was that villain Anonymous, Kemble informed the public, rather than his assailant, "that no humiliation degraded his services to those who did him the honour to employ him; and that the power entrusted to him was perfectly satisfactory to his own feelings, and entirely adequate to the liberal encouragement of poets, of performers, and to the conduct of the whole business of the theatre."

As it is usual in such cases, the politicians of the playhouse split into parties. The one set looked upon the appointment as the herald of reviving sense; the other, as the devotion of the whole stage to the interests of the house of Kemble. But the truth was, his system of management was precisely that of Garrick, with a greater desire to see strength everywhere. He thought more of the whole than his great predecessor, whether from modesty or judgment. Garrick, knowing himself to be the Pit diamond, surrounded himself with foil. Kemble, less dazzling, formed a cluster of kindred value about him. His scheme of management was a good

play and farce, well sorted, and strict regularity in every part of the concern. Yet, from the first hour of his management, I can, of my own knowledge, assert that he did nothing without the permission of Mr. Sheridan.

CHAPTER VII.

Kemble's Management from October, 1788 — The "Panel," for Mrs. Jordan — Beatrice and Her Gown — Her Performance in the "Confederacy" — Her Rosalind Somewhat Divides the Town — Whether the Sprightliness or the Sensibility Should Predominate? — Perhaps the Truer Rosalind, if Shakespeare Were to Decide — Her Nell, in the "Devil to Pay" — Moody, in Jobson — Mrs. Jordan's Opinion of Her Own Art — Her Aspiration after the Fine Lady — Mr. Cumberland Writes for Mrs. Jordan — His Comedy of the "Impostors" a Hurried Composition while Writing "Calvary" — The "Farm-house," Mrs. Jordan's Country Lass — In the Summer of 1789, Edwin Engaged Her at Richmond — The King's Illness Commenced at Cheltenham when Mrs. Jordan was There — The Question of the Regency — Display of Burke — His Vehement Dexterity — King's Recovery, Sympathy of the Stage — Duel between the Duke of York and Colonel Lennox — The Drawing-room — The Opera House Destroyed by Fire — The French Revolution.

THE season of 1788–89 commenced in the usual way, the routine of the last season. Through the whole month of October Mrs. Jordan had very little rest, and performed in both pieces with untiring zeal and great attraction. Kemble had not been inattentive to her, for he

had found time to make a capital addition to her stock of afterpieces by cutting down a comedy of Bickerstaff's (taken from Calderon), and called by him, "'Tis Well It's No Worse." Kemble named his farce, however, the "Panel," and I believe he was right; for the spectators love to be in the secret, while the actors are in the dark, and really enjoy a trick the more because it is none to them. Whoever heard Mrs. Jordan, in Beatrice, reiterating her charge upon Lazarillo that "he certainly stole her gown," in this farce, had a lesson of comic utterance which he would never either forget or equal. Vanbrugh's "Confederacy," also, was to receive a Corinna fully equal to any representative of the character since the year 1705. Her Rosalind, in "As You Like It," for her benefit, somewhat divided the town, and the lovers of the sentimental and the humourous were arranged under the standards of Siddons and Jordan. It seemed to me that your mood determined the preference at the time. If we refer ourselves to Shakespeare, who, in all reason, ought to determine on a matter so entirely his own, perhaps Rosalind ought to excite laughter. She seems a being of such natural sprightliness, that it is hardly an effort for her to put down everything by her

wit. She assumes the style of a saucy forester, and the dress of a boy forest-born; but the will cannot give the power for the occasion, in the degree she possesses of it: think of such an impromptu, for example, as the costume of a lover, the different paces of time, her dissection of Jaques, and declaration, as it seems, of her real, not assumed advice, — "I had rather have a fool to make me merry, than experience to make me sad, and to travel for it too." Then, again, the broad sally upon the tardy Orlando:

"Break an hour's promise in love? he that will divide a minute into a thousand parts, and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him, that Cupid hath clapt him o' th' shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole."

Think, too, of the snail, his jointure and his destiny. But the natural buoyancy of Rosalind is incessant, and her wit inexhaustible. She "met the banished duke, her father, yesterday, and had much question with him." Do his losses, his sufferings, the very circumstance of his not detecting her, at all soften her mind? No; she is able to divert herself even at such a moment. "He ask'd me of what parentage I was; I told him of as good as he; so he laugh'd, and let me go. But

what talk we of fathers, when there is such a man as Orlando?"

Besides, therefore, the adaptation of her figure to the moonish youth, I can have no doubt that her peculiar animal spirits rendered her the truer Rosalind. She sometimes rather carried a "forehand shaft" too home perhaps; but acting should not be moulded to the sickly appetite: to excite the honest, sincere, hearty laugh of the healthful is the genuine praise, and should be the aim of the true comedian. We should remember, too, that to render all this comic power its very fullest effect, she acted upon a stage of very moderate compass, and in a theatre that would not hold more than £350, place your audience ever so close to each other — that she was at the time not more than two and twenty, of great activity and neatness, and really the darling of the public. To speak of her Nell, in the "Devil to Pay," which she acted after Rosalind, is unnecessary: those who have seen it will laugh at the very word; those who have not may rest satisfied that every succeeding performer of the part will preserve some of her naïveté, with such powers as they can bring to the competition. There was a dry, sluggish determination about Moody that ren-

dered his strap very efficient. His manner was peculiar, but he was a valuable actor, and most respectable man.

It is whimsical in such an actress as Mrs. Jordan to long for the honours of polite comedy, and content herself with a titter among the spectators, instead of the convulsive roar of laughter that followed the genuine workings of nature within her. The secret of her charm, as she told a friend, was that, "when she had mastered the language of a part, she said to Dame Nature, My head, hands, feet, and every member about me, are at your commandment," and the bountiful goddess gave her no farther trouble with the business. But the fine lady is a being of art, and I suppose must be left to the mode which fashioned her. I should have devoted all the Lady Bells to Miss Farren, without a wish for the flutter of the fan, or the agony of the drawing-room curtsey; but it was her foible, and managers took care that she should not stretch such pretensions too far. I will admit that it may cross the deliberation of an actress, that a time will arrive when age, or perhaps, still more unluckily, figure, may somewhat clash with the performance of the Romp, and that the importance can only be kept by varying

the business of the scene. But I think it rarely happens that equal celebrity is gained in a second line. The excellence that captivates at first takes so strong a hold that even the character she first appeared in is preferred to every other, even to the very last of the actress. Clive said that the town would prefer Garrick and herself, at eighty, to all the youth of the theatre. I believe they justified her opinion of their good taste.

I have hitherto lamented that no one, with powers adequate to the task, had undertaken to write for Mrs. Jordan; and I drew the limits, I think, accurately (and they were sufficiently extensive), within which an author of genius would be sure to meet with the happiest aid from her talents. Mr. Cumberland was unquestionably a writer of great powers; but he was unfortunately too soon satisfied with his easy conceptions, and too little careful to keep the species of his different compositions distinct. He thus imposed a double difficulty upon his muse, and one work was unavoidably injurious to the other. He wrote a novel and a comedy together, and recruited his exhausted spirits by dreaming of an epic poem. He amused himself with such trifles at a watering place, and could not be astonished if they partook

of the idle air of such resorts, and like their other amusements were things to be forgotten. But a dramatic mind will always do something. Cumberland did not try to produce a "School for Scandal," —

> "For though the poet's matter nature be,
> His art must give the fashion. And that he,
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the Muse's anvil."

However, he had devoted a few days to the composition of two female characters in full contrast, and these he destined for Mrs. Jordan and Miss Pope, who were to be assailed by two adventurers, called, instead of Aimwell and Archer, Lord Janus and Polycarp. The latter, I presume, so styled as fruitful in stratagems. Miss Pope as the Deborah Sapient had all the novel attributes of antiquated virginity to fancy; for in her own person she had none of them, but she feigned the thing she was not, and disputed the palm of fine acting with Jordan, who, as Miss Eleanor, pretended the simplicity that she was far above, and displayed both sense and sensibility of no common sort. Cumberland here committed an error in which he had many to participate, even —

"The greatest and the best of all the train,
Shakespeare."

Like the "Merchant of Venice," the "Impostors" ended in the fourth act, and the fifth was made up of such matter as the different fertility of the two poets could supply; in Shakespeare by the two rings of Portia and Nerissa, and in Cumberland by incidents, also anticipated by the audience, but loaded by useless talk, and not like the *hors d'œuvre* of Shakespeare, sportive, fanciful, and diverting.

The epilogue was in better taste, and did not spare even the author, for the following couplets often applied to him:

"But what is one poor puff of his own making
When all around him the wild waves are breaking?
Plunged in the gulf, like Cëyx, still he raves,
Murmuring his own applause beneath the waves." [1]

The conclusion was personal as to the speaker, and enumerated her wide range of utility very pleasantly and pertinently:

"For me, tho' poets various arts employ
To make me wife, maid, widow, man, and boy,

[1] "Nominat Halcyonen, ipsisque immurmurat undis."
— *Metam.*, xi. 567.

Yet all this while there's but one thing in nature
I truly aim to be — your faithful creature.
Here I'm at home; this is my natural part;
This character flows freely from my heart."

Mrs. Jordan acted beautifully in this comedy, but it was too weak to be long-lived. After the first night it waited till the 4th of February for the second, and closed its career on the sixth, when neither author nor manager expected further profit from it. As this author seldom suspected the real cause of his failure, he might not be quite content with what satisfied everybody else. It is certain that he only once mentions Mrs. Jordan in his memoirs, and merely names the play in his progress to "Calvary."

Mr. Kemble again employed his pruning-knife for Mrs. Jordan, and cut down the old "Country Lasses" of Charles Johnson to an entertainment in two acts, called the "Farmhouse." Her Aura was extremely diverting, and the farce augmented the stock list of very attractive afterpieces at Drury Lane Theatre.

In the summer Edwin opened the Richmond theatre, and announced Mrs. Jordan in an occasional prologue, of which the poetry was not extraordinary, but it describes plainly enough the

popularity of the charmer, and, therefore, a few lines of it may be pardoned for one accuracy — I don't mean that of rhyme.

> "My next vast merit I must have a word on,
> *Ecod!* d'ye know I've got you Mistress Jordan."

And then he notices her leg, her ankle, foot, and promises the girls "a kiss of Sir Harry!" When I read the fishy exclamation which is printed in italics, I wonder that the licenser of George the Third should have had no sense of the profaneness which his more solemn successor, the author of "Broad Grins," would now surely blot in virtue of his oath. He actually struck out that positive truism, "Cod's fish," in a modern farce, I suppose upon the authority of Hamlet. "All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down." But he owes the world nothing on the score of pleasantry, at all events.

The long and melancholy illness of the king, which originated most probably at Cheltenham, hung heavily upon the theatres for the greater part of the season. The stage, however, would not, in Johnson's language, "echo back the public voice," and could not much mitigate the public

grief. I feel little disposition to enter into the angry discussions in Parliament upon the subject of the regency, but a few points in the controversy, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, claim to be remembered for their neatness, when the grave has silenced the angry feelings of genius which produced them. Mr. Burke took the lead in such effusions. "He had heard of an idea entertained of divine right in the house of Stuart, but he had considered it long exploded; but of late it had returned unexpectedly upon us, Lord Chandos having termed the chancellor of the exchequer a heaven-born minister. The right was, therefore, renewed upon earth, and only transferred from a king to a minister."

In the same debate, being called to order by Mr. Pitt, and the intemperance of his language being sarcastically reproved, he happily retorted, "That if he had expressed himself in the language of passion, it arose, not from a hastiness of temper, but from a deep consideration of the subject — he was pursuing the game of ambition itself, and therefore it was not unnatural to be a little elevated."

Upon another occasion he used language that seemed indecorous, whatever might be thought of

the proposition it laid down. He said, "The Almighty had been pleased to smite the sovereign with his hand; he had hurled him from the throne, and put him in the condition of the meanest peasant in the country." The Marquis of Graham called him to order, and was about to move that his words be taken down, when Burke interrupted him by a sentence, that at once softened the indecorum, and fired his envenomed arrow into the bosom of the House itself. "The lamented situation of the sovereign was not the act of the House, but the will of the Divinity; but depriving his blood, the Prince of Wales, from the full inheritance of his authority, was an act of that House."

How exactly did Burke, in his own person, exemplify the course he himself had ascribed to Junius. "He has carried away our royal eagle in his pounces, and dashed him against a rock; but while I expected in this daring flight his final ruin and fall, behold him rising still higher, and coming down souse upon both Houses of Parliament; yes, he did make you his quarry, and you still bleed from the wounds of his talons. You crouched, and still crouch, beneath his rage."

It did not suit Mr. Burke to see that the present question was of a trust, not an inheritance, and

they who entrust are the only judges of the quantum of power they may choose to delegate — all limitation implies unwillingness to trust beyond the absolute necessity of the case. We do not make laws to insult our imperfect nature, but to restrain it against possible error or guilt. They who suppose Pitt would have been more complaisant, had his office been secure, do not know the man. His father, in such a case, might have bowed to a regent: the son, less impetuous, was more independent; he was a calmer spirit of equal pride.

It is impossible, in going through the business of a theatre for any time, to be insensible to the greater interests without. All that I can hope is, that the diversification afforded by such topics occasionally, or some points of taste, or personality in the anecdotes, may atone for the digressions, if they be such.

The recovery of the king from his alarming indisposition had literally rendered the country, if not wild, extremely elevated in their joy, and a series of drawing-rooms and public entertainments, given by the foreign ministers and the members of the royal family, at which their Majesties were present, testified amply that the recovery was no

simulated appearance, but an absolute fact; and I cannot doubt that the late furious conduct of the opposition, so little governed by the doctrines which they had long upheld, had rendered them unpopular to a degree beyond even the expectations of the minister, whose conduct had elevated him in the esteem of his royal master, contrary to the predictions of the supporters of the prince's claims to a virtual inheritance of the royal powers.

While matters were in this state, an occurrence happened which threw a damp, in some measure, upon the brilliant pleasures of the time. On the field-day of the Coldstream regiment of guards, the 15th of May, the Hon. Colonel Lennox addressed himself (I cannot but think improperly) to his colonel, H. R. H. the Duke of York, requesting to know whether his Royal Highness had said, "that he (Colonel Lennox) had put up with language unfit for any gentleman to bear?" The duke, of course, at such a time, made no answer to the question, but ordered the colonel to his post. As soon as the field-day was over, his Royal Highness desired the attendance of all the officers in the orderly-room, where he called upon Colonel L. to state his complaint. When he had done so, the duke acknowledged that he had heard improper

language had been put up with by the colonel; the precise words he declined to repeat, and upon being pressed as to the author, the duke said, "Colonel Lennox might consider him as an officer of the regiment, and call upon him whenever he pleased."

This opinion, the duke said, he had himself heard given by a member at Daubigny's club, whom, however, he would not name, and Colonel Lennox wrote individually to all the members of the club, and obtained no satisfactory answer. This, consequently, made the matter the duke's own, who willingly consented to give the satisfaction demanded on the part of the colonel, and a meeting took place between the parties on the 26th at Wimbledon, a convenient distance, and one resorted to by the higher class of disputants; Lord Rawdon was the duke's second, Lord Winchilsea Colonel Lennox's. It ended in a shot from the colonel, which struck the duke's curl, who declining to return the fire, the matter dropped, his Royal Highness refusing to give any other sort of satisfaction, or admitting even that he now considered either the honour or the courage of the colonel established. The truth is that, as to personal bravery, there could not be a

question. Lennox was a good-tempered, careless man, and might not go to a club-room with a porcupine's fretfulness about him, and his quills ready to challenge every smile in his company. But I consider the affair at Wimbledon, however impolitic, because the danger as to the parties was unequal, to have been one of the bravest things in the world. Had the ball taken effect one inch from its course, Lennox could not have lived in this country the remainder of his existence.

My friend Reynolds, in his very entertaining life, tells us that on the very morning of the duel, being at Lord's cricket ground, he saw, *cricket*ally speaking, "standing out" in the long field, Lord Winchilsea and Colonel Lennox, both of whom seemed wholly occupied by their game. Lord Winchilsea must have retired from this pleasanter field to pen the account of the duel in concert with Lord Rawdon, for it was inserted next day in the newspapers. But Colonel Lennox did not abstain from any of his usual habits on account of his difference with royalty, and I do his Royal Highness the duke the justice to say that he personally took no kind of exception at his doing so. He readily consented to anything that might relieve Colonel Lennox from his present embar-

rassing situation. Accordingly, after a military convention of the Coldstream in the orderly-room, and a deliberation of two days, the officers came to the following decision: "It is the opinion of the regiment that, subsequent to the 15th of May, Lieutenant-Colonel Lennox has behaved with courage, but, from the peculiarity of the circumstances, not with judgment."

His judgment may, perhaps, be still more questionable on the following point. On the 4th of June, the king's birthday, he absolutely presented himself at court, and stood up with Lady Catharine Barnard. The Prince of Wales did not see this until he and his partner, the princess royal, came to Mr. Lennox's place in the dance, when, struck with the incongruity, he took the princess's hand just as she was about to be turned by Mr. Lennox, and led her to the bottom of the dance. The Duke of York and the Princess Augusta came next, and they turned the colonel without the least particularity or exception. The Duke of Clarence and the Princess Elizabeth came next, and his Highness followed the example of the Prince of Wales. The dance proceeded, however, and Colonel Lennox and his lovely partner danced down; when they came to the prince and princess

his Royal Highness took his sister and led her to her chair by the queen. Her Majesty, addressing herself to the Prince of Wales, said, "You seem heated, sir, and tired." "I am heated and tired, madam," said the prince, "not with the dance, but tired of dancing in such company." "Then, sir," said the queen, "it will be better for me to withdraw, and put an end to the ball." "It certainly will be so," replied the prince, "for I never will countenance insults given to my family, however they may be treated by others." At the end of the dance, accordingly, her Majesty and the princesses withdrew, and the ball concluded. The prince, with his natural gallantry, explained to Lady Catharine Barnard the reason of his conduct, and assured her ladyship that it gave him much pain to have been under the necessity of acting in a manner that might subject a lady to a moment's embarrassment.

Thus, with a single country-dance, ended the ball of St. James's on his Majesty's birthday, from which he had determined so wisely to be absent; and thus, in the language of Voltaire, *toute fut consterné dans le plus agréable des châteaux possibles.*

The Opera House had been designed by Sir

John Vanbrugh, and was finished in the year 1706. Its success, at first, was so very equivocal, that when Nicolini and Valentina were sent for from Italy, the following classical epigram was levelled at the concern :

"To emulate Amphion's praise,
Two Latian heroes come,
A sinking theatre to raise,
And prop Van's tottering dome.

"But how this last should come to pass,
Must still remain unknown,
Since these poor gentlemen, alas!
Bring neither brick nor stone."

I was coming across the park from Pimlico, on the night of the 17th of June, when, upon turning the corner of the queen's house, this dreadful conflagration burst upon my eye — it seemed as if the long lines of trees in the Mall were waving in an atmosphere of flame. The fire appears to have commenced in the roof, and the demonstration to have taken place rather earlier than the incendiary had calculated. The dancers had been rehearsing a ballet upon the stage that evening, and sparks of fire fell upon their heads, and in great terror they effected their escape. Madame Ravelli was with great difficulty saved by a fire-

man. Madame Guimard lost a slipper, but her feet, as they ever did, bore her safely.

There never was the least doubt in the world that the malignity of some foreign miscreant had systematically effected the destruction of the building: the whole roof was in combustion at one moment; a cloud of heavy smoke, for a few seconds, hung over the building, succeeded by a volume of flames, so fierce that they were felt in St. James's Square, and so bright that you might have read by them as at noonday. A very excellent artist, who had been many years connected with the Opera House, told me that Carnevale, upon his death-bed, revealed the name of the incendiary.

As was customary in those days, the Bridewell boys served their great engine with the vigour of youth and the calm sagacity of veterans. Burke might have come out of Carlton House; he was standing before it, and anxiously directing the attention of the firemen to its preservation. Mr. Vanbrugh, a descendant of Sir John, was in the greatest peril of all the sufferers — he had an annuity of eight hundred pounds, secured upon the building. Some houses in Market Lane, the usual rubbish about a theatre, were destroyed

along with the Opera House. The stables of the Whitehorse Inn also were a prey to the flames, and at the back of the ruin the fire was burning even fiercely, though low, at twelve o'clock the next day. The books of the theatre were saved; so was the chest, in which there was about eight hundred pounds, and this was nearly all that was preserved. Never was devastation more complete.

However, Novosielsky erected, upon the old site, a theatre really suited to the object, admirably calculated for sound, and afforded that magnificent refuge to the Drury Lane company, which, perhaps, disposed both our managers to erect playhouses which were fit for nothing but operas.

But we were fallen upon days in which such a mischief as the above was a trifle, injuring a few individuals at most, and reparable by their own ingenuity and enterprise, with the ready benevolence of those who have charity far beyond their pleasures. France now began to wear an appearance which, to the intelligent, indicated a convulsion transcending all that fiction had ever imagined:

> "More than history could pattern, though devis'd,
> And play'd to take spectators."

The affliction and recovery of our own monarch were rapidly followed by the insult, the degradation, the captivity, and the sacrifice of his great rival; and the stage, which had poured out its song of triumph on the first theme, was soon to display its puny imitation of the terrors and victories of the second, to discover freedom in the excesses of a hired rabble, and the regeneration of the human race in a government without balance, in which parties immolated each other in succession, and any opinions held beyond the ascendant of the hour exposed the venerable and the wise, the virtuous and the beautiful, to the pike of the assassin, or the equally thirsty axe of the guillotine. Such exhibitions of the stage require tact rather than talent; the writers keep up the madness of the hour, and are hardly named when it is past. Any attempt at composition would be ridiculous, and useless if it were made; happier in one thing than the events they celebrate, that the dramas may be forgotten with pleasure, and the subjects of them are held in constant and painful remembrance.[1]

[1] After all the horrible excesses of the revolutionary mania had passed away, and the vast talents of Bonaparte had reduced the discordant elements to subjection, when the Bourbons

had revisited and occupied their ancient throne, and a charter had been consecrated which seemingly established them for ages, a childish invasion of representative rights and the freedom of the press has driven Charles the Tenth and his family once more into exile, and stained his brief annals with the blood of his people, unnecessarily and wantonly shed. But Napoleon had pardoned the Polignacs, who were in his power. — August, 1830.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Summer of 1789 — Tate Wilkinson's Benefit at Leeds, Mrs. Jordan Arrives to Act for Him — The Yorkshire Prudery — Mrs. Jordan at Harrowgate on Her Way to Join Mr. Jackson at Edinburgh — Mrs. Siddons at York — Mary, Queen of Scots — Mrs. Fawcett's Compliment to Her — Mrs. Siddons Prefers to Act in London, and Why — Mrs. Jordan and Miss Farren in the Same Places — The Prince of Wales — Miss Catley's Death — The "Two Gentlemen of Verona" Idly Revived — Mrs. Jordan's First Appearance at Drury Lane This Season, so Late as February, 1790 — Mr. Kemble Engages Her Brother, Bland — He Acts Sebastian to Her Viola — Mrs. Behn's "Rover" Altered by Mr. Kemble — Jordan and Woffington in Hellena — Young Bannister — His Character through Life — Morris's "Adventurers" — Mrs. Jordan's Little Pickle — The "Spoil'd Child" Called Her Own, Perhaps Bickerstaff's — The "Intriguing Chambermaid" — "Better Late than Never" — Mrs. Jordan the Heroine — Munden Comes to Town from Chester — Mrs. Jordan Plays Celia in the "Humourous Lieutenant" of Fletcher — Beauties of That Character — Her Alarming Epilogue by Harry Bunbury — Summer of 1791, a Journey to York — Kemble *vice* Jordan.

MRS. JORDAN, in the summer of 1789, took her usual northern tour; and her old manager, Tate Wilkinson, having been crippled by accident, received a letter from her, to tell him that she would act at Leeds for

his benefit, and appointing the play and farce. We are here furnished with a lively instance of her power of sustaining fatigue. The night fixed upon was Monday, the 6th of July, and at two o'clock of that day Mrs. Jordan was not arrived. The manager in distress had put off his benefit until the Wednesday; but at half-past four on the Monday she sent him word that she was just arrived, and ready to act Sir Harry Wildair and Nell on that very evening, and was quite astonished to see the play changed. She had come post from London, and was in the family-way very obviously. The play not having been done at the theatre a long time, needed rehearsal. She told Tate that, if she did not act that night she could not play at all, for she was on the wing to Edinburgh, with a £500 penalty to pay if she did not arrive at the appointed time. By great persuasion she consented to stay till the Wednesday, but when he hinted at the *gratis* performance, she said that was now quite out of the question, her time was too valuable just then; if she stayed she should be put to great inconvenience, and must have thirty guineas. However, she agreed to accept twenty, and stay the two days for her old friend, and on Wednesday astonished the precise ladies of Leeds

with Sir Harry Wildair and his gallantries. The manager fancied the applause not so violent as she had been accustomed to in London, and supposed that the country ladies did not think Sir Harry's chastity improved by a female representative. This fact I have already presumed to doubt; and as to the applause, the payment of twenty guineas, unwillingly, might make a lame man, with a doctor and apothecary at his elbow, turn a deaf ear to it. Nell, at all events, had none of Farquhar's freedom to restrain the thunder of applause. It is dangerous to begin the habit of resting on a journey, for upon leaving Leeds she reached Harrowgate, only fourteen miles off, when a subscription purse from the company at the different hotels so strongly tempted her that she agreed to recruit herself there for three or four days, and diversify the amusements of the devotees to sulphurated springs. But the penalty, which she had awaked at Leeds to operate upon Tate Wilkinson, was brought still nearer enforcement by her stay at Harrowgate; and, on her arrival at Edinburgh, she found Jackson seriously offended and disposed to litigation.

When Mrs. Siddons was at York this summer, she put up for her benefit her friend St. John's

tragedy of "Mary, Queen of Scots," which the sympathy of all ranks, rather than any genius in the play, rendered endurable. I mention it to notice a circumstance honourable to the taste and feeling of the first Mrs. Fawcett, a lady of great merit. The manager sent her the part of Elizabeth to study. Her reply was remarkable; she said "she would willingly incur the forfeit rather than act a character which she judged so ill-drawn;[1] and under any other actress than Mrs.

[1] I do not know whether Mrs. F. went historically to work in her objections, or whether she looked at the part of Elizabeth merely as an actress. But St. John makes the death of Mary proceed immediately from the St. Bartholomew, an event at thirteen years distance. Sir Amias Paulet too is exhibited as a savage gaoler in the play; but his noble letter to Walsingham quite passed over. "I have great grief and bitterness of mind, that I have liven," says he, "to see this unhappy day, in the which I am required, by direction from my most gracious sovereign, to do an act which God and the law forbiddeth." Evidently an order to make away with his royal prisoner. I suppose the hypocrite had provided for her own "clearance," like Macbeth, and had not the slightest fear of seeing the spirit of her murdered victim at any banquet given for her supposed success. Sir Dru Drury, though not named in the command, put his name to the reply. At the dreadful St. Bartholomew, the wretched Charles the Ninth was told by the governor of a fortress: "Sire, I have communicated your orders to the garrison under my command; I find in it many loyal subjects and brave soldiers, but not one executioner." I will not sully the humanity of our two countrymen by saying that they might conceive as much danger to

Siddons, she would never consent to do it." Anything that could more happily mark that, with that great woman, all competition was out of the question, will not easily be found. With any other actress some equality in the parts might be a thing of consideration.

As we have been led to mention Mrs. Siddons and the performance by her of the leading characters in tragedy, let me just notice the preference she felt for London, and the reason for it. She explained herself thus to her friend, the York manager. "Acting Isabella, for instance," said she, "out of London is double the fatigue. There the loud and long applause, at the great points and striking situations, invigorated the system; the time it occupied recruited the breath and nerve. A cold, respectful, hard audience chills and deadens an actress, and throws her back upon herself; whereas the warmth of approbation confirms her in the character, and she kindles with the enthusiasm she feels around her."

Mrs. Jordan said the same thing of her Yorkshire audiences, and at one time declared she never would act again among them. The courtly

reside in the compliance as resistance. This poor Davison, the secretary, experienced to his ruin.

style of Miss Farren suited them better: Lady Milner used to sport the friend she so highly esteemed in the stage-box; and she was this summer in the very highest vogue, for the Prince of Wales patronised her, and the effect of his decided taste made her receipts almost, for a few nights, emulate those of Mrs. Siddons herself, the greatest theatrical favourite that the country had ever known.

The family of Catley coming from Yorkshire, I am reminded of the decease of a favourite of that name, the celebrated Anne Catley, whom I could only know when a visible decline was sapping the vital power that bore her once triumphantly above all humourous singers.

Miss Catley was, I think, married to General Lascelles, and left a large family by him, four sons and four daughters; however, her will was signed Anne Cateley, and was written entirely in her own hand. The good sense that she unquestionably possessed appears eminently in the final settlement of her property. She makes Gen. Francis Lascelles sole executor, and bequeaths him ten pounds for a mourning ring. The eldest of her four daughters at the time of her decease was to have her wearing apparel,

watch, trinkets, etc., as a distinction; in all other respects, the four sons and four daughters were to have equal shares at the age of twenty-one years, and, until then, their shares were to be invested in the funds, and considered, as to the interest, applicable to their education. She had bought the house in which she died at Ealing for the daughters, and, as far as a provident parent could do, established them respectably. The probate called her property £5,000, but this was far from being the whole of it.

There was in her personal character a good deal of the careless boldness of Woffington; like her, too, she was extremely handsome, and her eye and mouth had a peculiar expression of archness. She aimed at the almost manly frankness of speech, and acted as one superior to censure when she raised the wonder of prudery. Catley had an understanding too sound to vindicate the indiscretions of her youth; but her follies did not long survive that period, and she amply atoned in her maturity for the scandal she had excited formerly in society. There was a graceful propriety in her domestic concerns. She was never profuse, and could therefore be liberal in all her arrangements. In her youth she had been acquainted

with difficulties, and the lesson was ever present to her mind. Her ear was always open to the unhappy, and her hand was enabled by economy to spare no scanty relief to strangers without invading the provision she had destined for her family. In the great relations of life as a daughter, wife, mother, and friend, she was on principle steady and exemplary. Her complaint, a pulmonary consumption, had wasted her to a shade, and it had lingered beyond the usual term of that baneful yet flattering pest. She was but forty-four at the time of her decease. There were many points of similarity between Mrs. Jordan and Miss Catley; not that the former ever possessed the nerve or the prudence of the latter.

I am sure that I seldom feel inclined to revoke at the suit of Shakespeare, but I never could understand Kemble's reason for evoking the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" from oblivion, in the month of January, 1790. If, in the administration of Garrick, with Holland and O'Brien, King and Yates, Miss Bride and Mrs. Yates, nothing came of this dramatic nothing, what was to be expected from Wroughton and Barrymore, Bannister and Dodd, Mrs. Kemble and Mrs. Goodall? It has hardly sufficient interest for an opera; for the

soliloquy of Launce, coming on with his dog Crab to talk to the audience, is in the very lowest style of the booth, and surely never excited any considerable laughter. There is a prettiness in parts of the dialogue without nerve, hints of scenes that should have been elaborated by the poet, and of characters to which he afterward added that giant strength which, either in tragedy or comedy, he alone could infuse into dramatic nature.

Mrs. Jordan did not appear this season at Drury Lane until the 8th of February, 1790, so that in fact neither in tragedy nor comedy could the manager avail himself of his greatest force. He acted himself in a few monodramas, such as "Henry the Fifth," and the happy start of the Storaces in opera, with Cobb and Prince Hoare to furnish dialogue and point to the counterpoint of the composer, kept him alive until his comic muse returned, which he had at length the pleasure to see; and the Country Girl, in charming health, took her usual hold of the fashionable visitors and the public in general.

To oblige Mrs. Jordan, Kemble found or made a situation for her brother, Mr. Bland, and he acted Sebastian, in "Twelfth Night," to her Viola, combining their natural with stage relationship. Per-

haps he was personally more like her than a stranger to her blood; and as in his figure he did not tower above the disguised sister, the mistake of one for the other less offended the spectator's eye. But it was not in this family that the males shared the genius of the females — that proud distinction the "bountiful blind woman" reserved for the Kembles.

On the 8th of March, Kemble revived Mrs. Behn's comedy of the "Rover," which he called "Love in Many Masks," a confused and uninviting title; but he had Mrs. Jordan for the successor of Woffington, in the part of Hellena, and Wilmore he acted himself. Blunt, which had been performed by Shuter, lost nothing by being trusted to the whim of Bannister, an actor who now had established himself as the youthful eccentric of the middle comedy, and the hero of the eccentric farce; the male counterpart of the Romp in her gaiety, and, still more to his honour, her only rival in the expression of feeling that did not character as tragic.

Men, when made up of whim, like Bannister, commonly fly out of the course, and, however diverting in their humour, secure everything but respect from the world whom they cheer. But,

from my first knowledge of Bannister to the present hour, he made his prudence a guard over his festivity, and though no man was ever more solicited in social life, his amusement neither disturbed his business nor deranged his circumstances: he could always dispense the liberal aid which he did not need, and never drew on himself, in a single instance, that I remember, the displeasure of the public. Being his contemporary through no trivial series of years, I remember him in tragedy, and am not sorry that he put off the buskin early in his career. Unless the power in tragedy is transcendent, excellence in comedy renders it questionable, and often, from some unlucky recollections, ridiculous. When the actor attains the wonderful in both, his universality enlarges his honours. The genius of John Bannister met with a congenial author in Mr. Prince Hoare, who may perhaps, as a farce writer, be said to have best suited his talent. But this palm is powerfully contested by very able men. Yet whatever contest may exist among the writers of farce, there is none whatever, where Bannister is concerned, among the performers. I have seen no actor at all near him where he was fully himself.

On the 18th of this month, Mr. Morris, then I

believe at college, had a farce at Drury Lane, called the "Adventurers." Peregrine was the part designed for Bannister; but Sir Peregrine, a man uniformly unlucky, was given by Suett in a style that carried the competition in his favour. This author became a Master in Chancery, with "his statutes, his recognisances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries;" but alas, the profession of literature should be lucrative for more than two in an age, for any man of talents to follow their bent, and forsake the substantial for the tempting and perhaps the delusive, but certainly never the permanent.

For her benefit this season Mrs. Jordan, after the "Belle's Stratagem," presented a farce called the "Spoil'd Child," and her Little Pickle took its run among the romps of both sexes, which her immortal youth long continued to supply with the frolic of the pinafore and the tucker. Pickle was ascribed to Mrs. Jordan herself, then to Mr. Ford, whose Little Pickle was still younger, we know. The truth is, I suppose, the exile Bickerstaff, whose Sultan had been kept alive by Mrs. Jordan, still tried occasionally to be received under cover, and that the "Spoil'd Child" might yet contribute to the support of its parent.

I touch only upon the new performances of Mrs. Jordan, the routine is already known. It is true that new study and a number of rehearsals may be fatiguing to an actress who has to act five out of six nights through a winter season; but it may be observed that, though the audiences are changed, the parts remain the same, and it is impossible for them not to tire the performer upon endless repetition; so that, however burthened, it is usual to wish — not that the weight may be lessened or the duty abridged, but that the quality of the burthen may be a little altered. In the season of 1790–91 the "Intriguing Chambermaid" of Henry Fielding, which he had dedicated to Mrs. Clive, was revived for Mrs. Jordan, and produced the most laughable effects. We may imagine that Mr. Kemble looked carefully over the dialogue. Palmer distinguished himself in the character of the drunken colonel, and with Mrs. Jordan merited less disputable matter, — the farce was not a general favourite.

On the 17th of November, 1790, Miles Peter Andrews, who had a lively ambition for comic fame, produced a comedy written by himself, Reynolds, and Topham, but what was remarkable in the composition was its being without the

smallest attempt at novelty. Mrs. Jordan, who performed the heroine in various disguises, ruins the circumstances of Mr. Kemble, Saville, whom she intends to marry. There is an under-plot of a Sir Charles Chouce and the Flurries, and a Mr. Pallet, the painter, and a Litigamus for Bannister, Jr. It was a thing of shreds and patches, and one of the parties had only to shake off his associates and trust entirely to himself, earnestly and assiduously, to become a dramatist, who is likely to excite laughter for more than a century. "Better Late Than Never" was not strong enough to run. It was kindly contrasted in its course by the "School for Scandal" and the "Rivals;" by which a manager might seem to be more solicitous for his own popularity than the success of the new candidate. Besides that, not to run a new play is, in fact, to tell the town that you cannot depend upon it; they will take you at your word without difficulty. The death of this play, like that of the "Iron Chest" subsequently, was caused by Dodd, who always bestowed the whole tediousness of his author upon the audience, whereas your judicious player is alive to all the impressions he makes in the house, and cuts his matter short before it becomes insupportable.

The epilogue contrasted the beau of former times with his slang brother of the present; and Mrs. Jordan raised a laugh of complaisance to herself in the latter mistake of the modern lounger; for he was a true critic in calling "Macbeth" an opera.

"'Zounds, be a little calmer!
Who's that — the Jordan? — No, you fool — R. Palmer."

Although the more immediate subject of the work leads me to Drury Lane Theatre in preference, yet I willingly enter the rival house to commemorate the first appearance of such an actor as Munden. He came from Chester avowedly to take the business of Edwin, though he more resembled Shuter in the broad, voluptuous style of his comedy. On the 2d of December, 1790, he acted Sir Francis Gripe in the "Miser," and Jemmy Jumps in the "Farmer." He had not the sly, personal humour of Edwin, who never made you think of acting at all; Munden, by his evident enjoyment of the effect he produced, and his reiterated efforts to make that effect as fervid as he wished it, showed you his own conviction that he had elaborately studied all that he was doing, that he knew his conceptions to be just, and that he executed them correctly, and, there-

fore, demanded his reward in the enjoyment of the audience. He was a slow actor for the most part, and not the most accommodating in his style to his brethren on the stage — it was very difficult to confine him; he came up close to the lamps, and, sideways, edged himself from one end of them to the other; painted always remarkably high for distant effect, and made his first and last appeal to the gods! He was, like Ned Shuter, called, familiarly, Joe, all over the house; and, more than any actor of his time, devoted himself not only to business, but the profits of it. He accumulated a handsome fortune in the profession, and has a robust old age to indulge in the notions only of acting again.

The benefit play of an actress is at least an opportunity of putting the town in possession of her own opinion of herself, and is, therefore, commonly seized for the purpose of extending the performer's claims. She can then invade the line of a rival, and correct the perhaps obstinate prejudice of a manager. She may open new sources of personal admiration — she may, in a word, make a benefit, the ingredients of which are known only to herself.

On the 22d of March Mrs. Jordan availed her-

self of this seasonable privilege, and revived, as Woffington did, the "Humourous Lieutenant" of Fletcher, that she might act his Celia, who now gave name to the play, which was called the "Greek Slave, or the School for Cowards." The play being but little known, I think it may be proper to notice the features of the character she acted. Celia is beloved by the king's son, Demetrius, and attached to him on the score of his valiant properties. Uneasy at an absence from him longer than usual, she arrives at court, unknown to the attendants, and is courteously saluted by Demetrius, to their astonishment, which makes them cluster round her in the usual manner, and she beautifully exclaims:

"How these flies play i' the sunshine."

At a future interview between them, the prince's honour calling him to the field, he reluctantly quits his adored mistress, who now strengthens his resolution, and there occurs a fine point for the actress:

"*Dem.* I must have one farewell more.
Cel. No! the drums beat — Not a hand more."

She is tempted to become the king's concubine, and displays her virtue and her wit in passages of

equal point and beauty. The king, himself acting his own reverend pander, and calling himself a soldier, is thus saluted by her:

"*Cel.* Oh, wretched man, below the state of pity!
Canst thou forget thou wert begot in honour?
A free companion for a king! — a soldier!
Whose nobleness dare feel no want but enemies?
Canst thou forget this, and decline so wretchedly!
Feed on the scum of sin? — Fling thy sword from thee?
Dishonour to the noble name that nurs'd thee."

The monarch now reveals himself in one line of uncommon expression:

"*Ant.* Why, then, I am a king, and mine own speaker."

Mark the truly dramatic reply of Celia, and estimate its value to such an actress:

"*Cel.* And I, as free as you, mine own disposer.
There, take your jewels; let 'em give them lustres
That have dark lives and souls; wear them yourself, sir."

After the villainy of ordering a potion to be given to her, the royal seducer sees her, like Hamlet, come in reading, and, like Polonius, he draws its application upon himself:

"*Cel.* I'm reading, sir, of a short treatise here,
That's called the Vanity of Lust: has your Grace seen it?
He says here that an old man's loose desire
Is like the glow-worm's light the apes so wonder'd at;

Which when they gather'd sticks and laid upon't,
And blew and blew, turn'd tail, and went out presently.
And, in another place, he calls their loves
Faint smells of dying flowers, carrying no comforts."

She proceeds to complete her argument, and makes a convert of her old admirer. Demetrius not doing justice to her virtues, but believing that she has yielded to temptation, she quarrels with him, and is only at length reconciled to the man she loves, when she is discovered to have rank as well as virtue to make her his equal.

There was something about Mrs. Jordan exceedingly romantic, and that made her find what was congenial in the princely connection of Celia. She loved to indulge this tendency of her mind, and was fond of the splendour of dress, though it added nothing to her personal attraction. She was the relaxation of dignity rather than state; and, whatever she might think, wore the trappings of tragedy without any of their usual effect upon the senses.

The real name of the character called Celia, in the present play, is printed by the editors, Evanthe and Enanthe, — the first, having a decided meaning,[1] I should prefer; and it is sufficiently discrim-

[1] Ευανθης — Flourishing in beauty.

inated from the same poet's Evadne, the wife of Amintor, in the "Maid's Tragedy."

Seward says, admirably well, upon such plays as the present: "We could almost wish the readers to drop the expectation of the events, to attend with more care to the beauty and energy of the sentiments, diction, passions, and characters." And, I may add, whatever change may take place in the manners of different times, and the taste of expression, yet, if our plays are to boast of poetry at all, our style must settle in the just medium of Fletcher. The divinity of Shakespeare, if it could be approached, cannot be sustained, and had better, therefore, remain unattempted by his countrymen, who, by aping his grandiloquence, will easily become turgid, but never sublime.

Mrs. Jordan, after the play, spoke a very alarming epilogue, written purposely for her by Harry Bunbury. But the reader will judge for himself as to the startling expressions; it was full of political allusions.

"How strange! methinks I hear a critic say;
What, she, the serious heroine of a play!
The manager his want of sense evinces,
To pitch on hoydens for the love of princes!
To trick out chambermaids in awkward pomp —
Horrid! to make a princess of a Romp.

" ' Depend upon't,' replies indulgent John,
' Some d——d good-natur'd friend has set her on.'
' Poh,' says old Surly, ' I shall now expect
To see Jack Pudding treated with respect;
Cobblers in curricles alarm the Strand,
Or my Lord Chancellor drive six in hand.'

" But I've a precedent — can quote the book —
Czar Peter made an empress of a cook.
There — now you're dumb, sir,— nothing left to say;
Why, changing is the fashion of the day. —
Far wilder changes Paris can display.
There Monsieur Bowkit leaves — ha! ha! — the dance,
To read Ma'mselle a lecture on finance.
The nation's debts — each hairdresser can state 'em,
And Friz in ways and means with hard pomatum:
Beaux lay down lap-dogs to take up the pen,
And patriot misses urge the rights of men:
Squat o'er their coals, sage fish-women debate,
Dealing at once in politics and skate;
And shrewdly mixing to each taste the dish,
With fresh and stale — philosophy and fish.

" If such odd changes you can gravely see,
Why not allow a transient change in me?
The charms that mirth despotic makes to-night,
In grief may shine more eminently bright —
More killing still the gaudy miss be seen,
Black as a crow — all love and bombasin.

" Say, my fair friends, what change has more success
In catching lovers, than a change of dress?

Caps, hats, and bonnets, Fashion's pack of hounds,
Each in its turn the trembling wretch surrounds;
One day you wound him with a civic crown;
Another — with a tucker knock him down:
In cruel pink to-night your game pursue,
To-morrow pommel him in black and blue.
Now in a turque — now *en chemise* assail him;
Till the poor devil flounders, — and you nail him.

"If I my frock have chang'd with some success,
And gain'd admirers in this regal dress;
If faithful Celia should your favour prove;
If pleas'd you listen to her constant love, —
If tir'd with laugh, a sigh of pity ease you;
I'll be a very weathercock to please you; —
The grave, the gay, alternately pursue,
Fix'd but in this — my gratitude to you."

Methinks I hear some female reader now exclaim: "What, sir, and did your admired heroine (for all authors admire their heroines, at least for a time) — What! and did Mr. Bunbury write, and Mrs. Jordan speak such a line as this in the face of the public?

"To pitch on hoydens for the love of princes!"

A thing so personal, so ready of application, and so sure of being made by either man or woman who lived within the sound of rumour. My answer must be: "Pray, madam, pay a little regard to chronology, and suspect anything rather than

a want of good taste in the Jordan. I can assure you, on my personal knowledge, that I have no such instances to record; and that you will be convinced of my sincerity if you will honour me with your company into Yorkshire the very ensuing summer. You will see, too, her attendant on that occasion, and know a great deal of stage matters two hundred miles from London. For the 'love of princes' you must wait awhile, and you will not be robbed of your ingenious application." Her friend, Harry Bunbury, had very faithfully attended as her laureate this year; for when she finished her favourite engagement at Richmond, a neighbourhood dear to her for a great portion of her life, he again exerted his sportive muse in a farewell, which recapitulated all her achievements, and expressed with much effect the reasonable acknowledgments of the kindness she had received.

The incessant application to the duties of a profession, which is considered mere play by those who never tried it, and its late hours and alternations of warm and chilling atmosphere, had at length made Mrs. Jordan seriously ill; she spat blood very frequently, and seemed in a progressive state of exhaustion, that might terminate in de-

cline, if she did not spare herself all unnecessary fatigue. Mrs. Jordan had not been at York for some years, and her friend Wilkinson had engaged her on the same terms as he had given to Mrs. Siddons and to Miss Farren. As she played on shares, her interest and the manager's were the same. She was to have a clear benefit on the Saturday in the assize week, and during that following, in which the musical festival occurred, she was to act one night conditionally, to be fixed by the manager. In the usual important style, he announced her for the six nights in the summer assize week, and advertised her in advance to commence her course with the "Country Girl," and Nell in the "Devil to Pay." When he arrived at York, he found Mrs. Jordan there, accompanied by Mr. Ford (afterward Sir Richard), and she refused Nell, because after Miss Peggy, another rather active character, with a song always encored at the end of it, it was really more than she could undertake, the following days considered. It is always dangerous to check a country manager in the career of his management — accordingly, disappointed of the magical Nell and her song, the ladies of York did not think the "Country Girl" sufficiently attractive; the house was not crowded,

and there was no half-price, though Fawcett was admitted to be strong as Gregory in the "Mock Doctor." The miserable affectation of thinking the "Country Girl" too vulgar for the refined taste of York, made Jordan literally lose her temper; and she told the manager that, if the audience had possessed "or soul or sense," she would have introduced a song. Tate begged that she would do so still to oblige *him*, and she consented. It was one written by a most amiable and even learned young lady, a daughter of Ryder, the comedian. The effect produced was quite rapturous, — the whole theatre was one voice and one will on the occasion (if the soul or sense might be questioned), and they encored the singer most alarmingly; but their applause did not outlive the song. Peggy was resigned to the ladies of London; and their preference of her was unshaken to the last. As the audience became frigid, the Jordan grew sullen. On the day following she had recruited from her journey, and acted Miss Hoyden in the "Trip to Scarborough," which was received brilliantly, and the adorable Nell. The audience did her full justice, and she was in the happiest vein, and supped with her jovial manager. The next performance was the "Belle's Strata-

gem," with the "Spoil'd Child." Here again the ladies played the critic, and decided that fashionable existence was quite out of her line, and the manager confesses that the receipt was shameful to a degree — the Pickle was admitted to be excellent. On the Thursday she performed Rosalind; here again her critics preferred the delicate languor of Mrs. Esten, and our child of humour could not smother her contempt for them. In her anger, she spared neither performers nor spectators; and what she had said of the latter was, with industrious malignity, circulated through the city; so that on the Friday, when she came on in Sylvia, in the "Recruiting Officer," she showed a determination to walk through the part, and the audience became as indifferent as herself. The receipt of the night was but twenty-five pounds. The Saturday was her own night, — Hypolita and Miss Hoyden. Her house was not what she expected, and she was here deficient in the respect of policy; besides, the good will of those who came was unquestionable, and should have been acknowledged; they should not have been slighted for the sake of others who chose to stay away. As early as the second act of the play, she sent the manager word that she would not play on

the York stage again; though he had distributed bills for her performing on Monday, the 15th of August, Lady Bell in "Know Your Own Mind," and Little Pickle. So that we see Tate was desirous to enlarge the engagement, though so little satisfied with the houses; but as the reader will remember, the manager had the appointment still of one night in the festival week, whether she enlarged her term with him or not, and he had fixed this for the Wednesday following. Mr. Ford and she were to dine with Wilkinson on the Sunday. On the Saturday night, Ford writes an excuse as to the dinner; a decline of the engagement to act further at York; but a readiness as to the festival night, on next Wednesday, or any other he might appoint. "Mrs. Ford, feeling herself unwell, was desirous of passing a day or two in the country." In this dilemma, giving up the Jordan as to further service, Tate bethought himself of my ever-regretted Mr. Kemble, who, in the mayoralty of his friend Wilson, was reposing himself very tranquilly at the Mansion House, and "letting the world slide" in his easy indifference. The truth was, he ought, for his own interest, to have been at Liverpool; but he made his health the plea for stopping that call upon him, and hon-

oured his friend's mayoralty by partaking his hospitalities until the time arrived for joining his brother Stephen at Newcastle, and giving him a lift in his season. Late as it was, Tate posted to the Mansion House, and found Kemble preparing for bed; but a matter of business led him to order a bottle for his old manager, and they talked away the little hours, though nothing was then concluded. However, on the Sunday, in pursuance of the invitation now made him to act in York, he called upon Mrs. Jordan, and, in fact, settled with her that she should take his place with his brother Stephen at Newcastle in the assize week, on the 22d of August, and he would occupy hers at York with Wilkinson. Mr. Kemble brought the mayor along with him, and proposed the terms on which alone he would act: first, that if Mrs. Jordan acted on the Wednesday night, he would not act at all; he would supply her place then also, and have the thirty guineas that she was to receive if she played. Wilkinson told him it was pounds, not guineas, that he gave, as Mrs. Siddons had so been paid, and Miss Farren also. Here the mayor was against him; he would have it guineas, and he carried that point. Now then the manager had only to settle the Wednesday night with Mrs.

Jordan, and accordingly his messenger found her at Castle Howard, in the right humour to pay him thirty pounds rather than even act on the single night, which he now fixed for Tuesday (not Wednesday), the 16th of August. The answer was brief, and what the manager wished. The signature causes me to preserve it.

"SIR: — I agree with pleasure to your proposal of giving you thirty pounds rather than ever perform in York. I shall return to-morrow and settle the balance of the account. I am, sir,

"Your obliged, humble Servant,

"D. FORD."

On receiving this answer, all things seemed to be adjusted. Giving up Monday night, he put up, with his full consent, Mr. Kemble for Othello on the Tuesday, and the name of Kemble, in York, always popular in that city, went up in the same proportion as that of the Jordan went down. That lady arrived on the Monday noon, and most honourably paid her forfeit of thirty pounds. It was not a pleasant thing, but under the circumstances a right one — her fame, as an actress, demanded the sacrifice — to use her own phrase, it was "death to play on to such a milk and water and

spiritless audience." But, however successfully the day commenced for Tate, it was not over, — Mr. and Mrs. Kemble dined with him. To his utter dismay, Kemble said, as soon as they were left alone, that, "without any impeachment of their friendship, as he trusted, he was bound to tell him that he had reflected on the engagement he had made, which his understanding told him was a very foolish one, and that he would act on shares on the Tuesday, or not play at all; for unless he got £160 in the week, it was not worth his while to play there." The parties separated equally obstinate, and Kemble went to the music-rooms, which were, on that night, assailed by the most dreadful hurricane, attended by vivid flashes of lightning; and the sublime chorus from Handel, "He gave them hailstones for rain," was awfully verified from without. I never knew a man so insensible to alarms of any kind as Kemble, — he pursued a purpose, or a train of thought, calmly, in situations where other men are forced from their poise, and now, upon being told, at intervals, by the people about him, how happy they were that he was to act to-morrow, he very coolly replied that "he did not think he should have that pleasure." The heat in the room was exces-

sive; the whole neighbourhood seemed in flames; Mara, Kelly, Crouch, and Harrison went through the entertainments, and the ladies sat to hear them to the end; but it was a night of unexampled terror. However, as Kemble would have said, such casualties had nothing to do with his bargain, in a thing of which nature he resembled his own Hotspur, so as to "cavil on the ninth part of a hair."

Tuesday morning came, says Tate, the bills were printed, the rehearsal called, the performers waiting, and no Mr. Kemble. At length the mayor became uneasy, poor Mrs. Kemble was in tears, "Kemble was fast asleep, and had given orders not to disturb him." At length he wrote a line to express his surprise to find his name in the bills, and to repeat that he certainly would not act unless the manager was kind enough to rectify the mistake he had made. That excellent man, Mr. Wilson, at last hit upon a medium between the contending parties, and about one o'clock was authorised to write the two lines following:

"Mr. Kemble agrees.

"T. Wilson.

"He will be ready to rehearse at two o'clock."

He went to the theatre, at the time, in perfect good humour, and as if nothing discordant had happened; perhaps remembered Mrs. Jordan's spleen, for he said "the audience should see that he would take pains, whether the applause was profuse or not." He had a very crowded house, and Mrs. Jordan herself among his audience, listening to the applause, which was not the less bountiful on account of the displeasure she had excited. On the Wednesday she set off on the Newcastle expedition, where she met with fresh mortifications, leaving Kemble to draw that night £109 19*s.* 6*d.* to his Hamlet, the part in which he was most distinguished, and, indeed, unapproached. His Macbeth, on the Thursday, was also greatly admired, — Lord Hastings, Petruchio, and Collins's Ode bringing but a thin house, on account of the attraction at the Assembly Rooms on the Friday; the actor was weak, in spite of his system, — however, on the Saturday, the weary sun (for he must have been weary this week) made a brilliant set in Zanga, and his share of the receipt of the week, taken at the door, was close upon £150 — but presents he unquestionably had.

As to poor Mrs. Jordan, she had never seen such an assize week. The arrangement with her

manager, Mr. Kemble, had left the advantage entirely on his side. As was usual with such stars, she had taken the management upon herself at Newcastle, made the proper communications to the newspapers, and announced her "Country Girl" and "Nell" for Monday, the 22d of August. Stephen Kemble's company was at Lancaster, and well enough prepared for his brother's exhibition; but the change which was announced found them utterly unprovided for their female general, and they, therefore, took the resolution not to march to Newcastle at all. The commander-in-chief, without an army, talked of bringing her action, and "doing she knew not what;" but the best thing she now could do was to think steadily of home, and of the steadiest of all her friends, — a London audience. She had, in fact, lost her summer, and was not entirely without blame for losing her temper where it was her interest to preserve it.

CHAPTER IX.

Doctor Woolcot Does Justice to Mrs. Jordan — The Drury Lane Company Remove to the Opera House — The Opening Laugh at Their Difficulties — Additional Prices Carried — Fawcett's Arrival in London with His Wife — Both Engaged by Mr. Harris — Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Kemble — The Press Accuses the Actress of Deserting Her Duty — Proof to the Contrary — The Declared Admiration of a Royal Duke — Mrs. Jordan's Family — Mr. Ford Made Pleas for Attacking Her — She Appeals to the Public by Letter — Finding that She Was, Notwithstanding, Still Persecuted, She Addresses the Audience in Person, and Remains Absolute Mistress of the Field — "Cymon" Revived with Great Splendour — The Beauty of the Cast — Kelly's Hospitality and His Guests — The "Village Coquette," for Mrs. Jordan's Night — Richardson's "Fugitive" Acted by Her — Miss Herbert, in That Comedy, Miss Farren — Mrs. Sheridan Dies, Commemorated by Genius — Her Epitaph — Sir Joshua Reynolds, What He Thought and Said of Mrs. Jordan — Regret That She Never Sat to Him — Brings Out a Play Called "Anna," against the Opinion of Kemble — Fate of Her Novelty — Of Mrs. Siddons's — Of Miss Farren's — Mrs. Jordan in Lady Restless — Cumberland's "Armourer."

E shall treat the memory of Mrs. Jordan as we always did her person; when she had at all suffered, as on the late occasion, we were happy to restore the equilibrium of her mind by telling her anything of a soothing

and respectful nature. The late Doctor Woolcot greatly admired Mrs. Jordan, and though he willingly admitted the excellence of Mrs. Clive, yet thought that the following inscription to her, in an obscure part of her garden, merited some illustration, in justice to the modern Thalia. Horace Walpole's point is thus conveyed:

> "Here liv'd the laughter-loving dame —
> A matchless actress, Clive her name;
> The Comic Muse with her retir'd,
> And shed a tear when she expir'd."

Peter Pindar replies to the Horace of Strawberry Hill, not Rome:

> "Truth and thy trumpet seem not to agree;
> Know Comedy is hearty — all alive —
> The sprightly lass no more expir'd with Clive
> Than Dame Humility will die with thee."

The venerable theatre of Garrick having been condemned to demolition, and the proprietors extending their views to some lofty speculation which was to leave them no competitors among the intelligent classes, Mr. Holland prepared the design of a magnificent pavilion for their approbation; and although it never was entirely completed, enough was done to excite the horror of the fanati-

cal part of the community. Burke's hatred of Mr. Sheridan made him prompt them with the notion that it emulated the temples of religion. But, for the present, we have only ruins before us.

The Drury Lane company, in the season of 1791–92, removed to the Opera House on the 22d of September, and they carried a slight increase of the prices of admission, which now became six shillings to the boxes, and three shillings and sixpence to the pit. Indeed, the splendid situation in which they placed their friends seemed to call for a small advance with propriety. Of all things that could be named, an Italian opera house was least suited to English play and farce, demanding a constant succession of scenes called flats, run on suddenly for the frequent changes of place, and the small-sized scenes of Old Drury were, with much difficulty, applied to the grand void devoted to the groups of the French ballet.

Cobb, though as a comic writer he could not rank with Sheridan, had now proved himself a very valuable ally to the theatre, for the "Haunted Tower" had brought very excellent houses; he wrote a prelude for the opening of the season, which excited risibility as soon as it was fairly

heard, which it was not on the first night. The jokes are somewhat a little forced, but they are ingenious always, and often neat. The transport of the scenery from poor Old Drury could not escape him, — the ocean was washed away by a shower of rain, and the clouds were obliged to be carried under an umbrella. The triumphal car of Alexander was shattered to pieces by a hackney-coach, at the corner of St. Martin's Lane, and the coachman persisted that he was on his right side of the way, and that Alexander, if he pleased, might take his number. Among the actors, some changes are in operation, — Parsons now wants to play tragedy, that he may be heard, and Wewitzer, a critical *maître de ballet*, who chatters about Demosthenes, and says that action is all, undertakes to reform that of Hamlet, for instance, altogether. He makes Parsons address the Ghost, a circumstance of itself enough to make any man give up the ghost with laughter, and corrects the start of astonishment and terror as idle and indecorous, since he came to the platform expecting to see it, and knew the royal shade to be his father. He decides, therefore, upon the propriety of bowing with filial reverence and love, which we may suppose the paternal phantom to return with more

solemnity, and the affecting grace of his time of life.

Mrs. Jordan's brother, Bland, came on as an opera singer, and maintained the rights of the Italian stage. He at length withdrew with the critic before mentioned, declaring that dancing and the opera should always go together in contempt of sense and nature. This, however it might suit John Bull, was outrageous every way, and little becoming the houseless, who had there found a home, it resembled the gratitude of Drury Lane itself, whose graceless sons no sooner get shelter in their scrapes, than they give the dwelling a bad character.

After a very spirited performance of the "Haunted Tower," Mrs. Jordan's Beatrice in the "Panel" put the audience in high good humour. She ran over the ground easily, and without seeming annoyed by it, but it made the exits and entrances comparatively tardy and flat — some of the actors considered it as a death-blow; but to what will not use at length reconcile us? However, we were drawn by that stage into a fondness for spectacle, which we could gratify sooner than a demand for sense, and at length the people themselves preferred the great theatre to the little one.

As I attended the first appearance of Mr. Munden before a London audience, so I cannot pay a less compliment to a gentleman who was in the York company with Mrs. Jordan, and who, like Munden, came to supply the loss of Edwin; I mean Mr. John Fawcett, who was something nearer to Edwin, but, as well as his competitor, was an actor of great and original powers. If, however, the supplying Edwin had been put up as the stage prize to be disputed, I think the two great competitors were Fawcett and Bannister. As to the parts really played by Edwin, Bannister, I believe, acted more of them, and, perhaps, was nearer to him; but the Pangloss of Fawcett was quite equal to anything ever done by that great comedian, who would have desired to live again, purely to act such a superior Lingo. Mr. Fawcett made the bow, which commenced a series of near forty years at the same theatre, on the 22d September, 1791, in the part of Caleb in "He Would Be a Soldier." He was greatly applauded, and his wife, of whose merits I have already spoken, appeared on the 3d of October following, in the part of Nottingham in the "Earl of Essex." As her husband in tragedy did not get beyond Kent in "King Lear," so his wife seemed to settle

about Emilia in "Othello," a part in which she was loudly applauded. She was a good, because a sensible second in tragedy; but I ought to explain that I mean no more than second rate by the term, supposing characters to rank according to their splendour or impression, and I explain further by saying that Hermione and Andromache, Zara and Almeria, Shore and Alicia, are equally first-rate characters, and require equal talent in the actress, who has usually performed either alternately, when the theatre contained a rival. Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Yates, and Miss Younge were rivals to each other. In everything fortunate, Mrs. Siddons never had a rival on the same stage with her, so that the attention to her was undivided, and her excellence undisputed.

I am apt to think that the unfortunate trip to Newcastle might disturb in some measure the harmony between Mrs. Jordan and Mr. Kemble. He certainly used to complain occasionally of that lady; and what proceeds from a manager soon finds its way into the public journals. However, as to her public duty, it would be difficult to find a considerable actress in either theatre who had laboured so very assiduously as herself. She had played twenty-four nights in two months, and very

frequently two parts in the same night; and when the management had no other attraction, she was put up three nights together without novelty to help her. If in such a course of duty indisposition sometimes caused an apology to be made, there was obviously a reasonable ground for it, without resorting to either caprice or her private arrangements, with which the public amusement was by no means connected. In spite of the above matter of fact, it was now insinuated that she was able to play, if she chose; and another position equally kind, that, not being absolutely confined to her room, if she ventured abroad at all, she ought to act at night, however languid she might be, and not considering that, though it was necessary to take the air, it was not advisable to take the night air, after great exertion in a weak state. But a circumstance had occurred which was now generally known; I mean the declared admiration of a royal duke for this delightful actress, and a wish for her society permanently, on such terms as his peculiar situation alone permitted. He invaded no man's absolute rights — he did not descend to corrupt or debase. Not considering himself entirely a creature of the state, he had presumed to avow an affection for a

woman of the most fascinating description; and his yet unsullied honour was the pledge that the fruits, if any, of such an union, should be considered most sacredly as his — that he took the duties of a father along with the natural relation. We were now in the ferment of the French revolution, and it became a crime in the eyes of no small part of the public that Mrs. Jordan had listened to a prince. In spite of his services as a naval officer, and the frank, cordial manners which were not more the characteristics of his profession than of his own nature, the noble seaman was neither well treated by the government, nor did his popularity at all compensate a very niggardly establishment.[1] On a sudden writers in the daily

[1] The union of the three royal brothers on the question of the regency, as it distinctly menaced the minister, so it did not greatly please the personage most interested in the question. I understood from high authority, indeed, that his Majesty thoroughly approved of the measures adopted by Mr. Pitt. It was remarked that this question completely changed the feelings of the two great parties. The Whigs were now for inherent indivisible sovereignty, and the Tories advocates for the power of Parliament. The former disdaining any limitation of an heir; the latter considering that very circumstance as exciting peculiar vigilance, — looking upon it, of course, as an abstract question, — and, to a man, admitting that, if any individual could be regent without condition and limitation, the Prince of Wales was the person.

papers became most anxiously solicitous about Mrs. Jordan's family (as if it had not at all times been the "precious jewel of her soul"). "What, in the new connection, became of Mrs. Jordan's family?" Mr. Ford was elevated by some persons into an injured and deserted man; they neither knew him, nor his privity to the advances made by the noble suitor. They had never seen him at the wing of the theatre, and thrown their eyes, as he must have done, to the private boxes. Mrs. Jordan was not a woman to hoodwink herself in any of her actions — she knew the sanctions of law and religion as well as anybody, and their value; this implies that she did not view them with indifference. And had Mr. Ford, as she proposed to him, taken that one step farther which the duke could not take, the treaty with the latter would have ended at the moment.

Finding herself thus annoyed at her very breakfast-table, she resolved not to sit unmoved, but let the public know her own feeling as a woman, while she vindicated her conduct as an actress. The following letter from her accordingly appeared in all the public prints. It was dated from the Treasury, by which must be meant the treasury of the theatre.

"TREASURY OFFICE, Nov. 30, 1790.

"SIR:—I have submitted in silence to the unprovoked and unmanly abuse which, for some time past, has been directed against me; because it has related to subjects about which the public could not be interested; but to an attack upon my conduct in my profession, and the charge of want of respect and gratitude to the public, I think it my duty to reply.

"Nothing can be more cruel and unfounded than the insinuation that I absented myself from the theatre on Saturday last from any other cause than real inability from illness to sustain my part in the entertainment. I have ever been ready and proud to exert myself, to the utmost of my strength, to fulfil my engagements with the theatre, and to manifest my respect for the audience; and no person can be more grateful for the indulgence and applause with which I have been constantly honoured. I would not obtrude upon the public an allusion to anything that does not relate to my profession, in which alone I may, without presumption, say I am accountable to them; but thus called on, in the present instance, there can be no impropriety in my answering those who have so ungenerously attacked me, 'that, if they could

drive me from that profession, they would take from me the only income I have, or mean to possess, the whole earnings of which, upon the past, and one-half for the future, I have already settled upon my children.' Unjustly and cruelly traduced as I have been upon this subject, I trust that this short declaration will not be deemed impertinent; and for the rest, I appeal with confidence to the justice and generosity of the public. I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"DOR. JORDAN."

I have not preserved any of the ill-natured sneers at this clear and candid explanation. It had not (perhaps a vain attempt) satisfied everybody, and I really now forget whether she or Mrs. Crouch, in the interim, was the Matilda of "Richard Cœur de Lion;" but, on the 10th of December, when she came on as Roxalana, in the "Sultan," it was obvious that a decided displeasure was organised against her, and she had nerve enough to advance intrepidly to the front, with no affected ignorance of their meaning, and properly confining herself to her theatrical duties, thus addressed them:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: — I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour, if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me very sensibly.

"Since I have had the honour and the happiness to strive here to please you, it has been my constant endeavour, by unremitting assiduity, to merit your approbation. I beg leave to assure you, upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession, but from real indisposition. Thus having invariably acted, I do consider myself under the public protection."

This was exactly the way to treat them. The manner was extremely good; the little hardship that sat upon her brow, and like a cloud kept back the comic smile that but waited their cheer to burst forth, the graceful obeisance that followed her complete triumph (for it was complete), and the mode in which she resumed her task to delight, after she had personally suffered pain, — as she trusted them all to nature, so that steady friend did not fail her in the least. There was nothing in the "Sultan," certainly, that came near the effect of the address. I was present, I re-

Mrs. Crouch
Engraved by Bartolozzi

member, and enjoyed it as much as I had done Mrs. Siddons's more solemn vindication as to Brereton's benefit.

The revival of Garrick's "Cymon," with great splendour, was an affair of Kelly's, who certainly could do a great deal in the spurring up Sheridan to exertion. But now he might fill his theatre with the personal admirers only of the female cast of it, *e. g.:*

Sylvia	Miss Hagley.
Urganda	Mrs. Crouch.
Fatima	Mrs. Jordan.
Phebe	Miss Decamp.
Daphne	Mrs. Bland.
Dorcas	Dicky Suett.

It is, without the old lady, an instance which is rarely met with, of captivations of great variety combined very skilfully, and almost rendering the "Cymon" of the former manager worthy of the crowds that followed it. Bannister, Jr., had more effect in Linco than Dodd; Parsons retained his old part, Dorus; Kelly looked Cymon exactly; and as to your Damon and Dæmon, by Dignum and Sedgewick, in musical merit and the demerit of their acting, there was not a pin to

choose between them. Old Bannister, too, was excellent, either as Merlin or his master.

After this gay spectacle there was a supper at Kelly's, at which, in the French phrase, I assisted, and Sheridan joined us, with Richardson and Ford. Mrs. Crouch sat at the head of the table and pledged the success, to which she had so much contributed, in the only wine she drank, port. Kelly lived hospitably and with little ceremony, and gave his song and his claret with equal readiness, and at that time they were equally good.

Mrs. Jordan, this season, was not what might be called strong at her benefit, for her play was the "Country Girl," and the farce, a rather hasty thing, from the French of M. Simon, called the "Village Coquette." It afforded Mrs. Jordan the necessary field for the display of her talents, and some clever scenery had been got up on the introduction of a rural breakfast, in imitation of Mrs. Hobart's Festino at Sans Souci. But nothing more came of the farce, the management not choosing to adopt it.

Mr. Richardson, the friend and constant companion of Sheridan, at length brought out a comedy at Drury Lane called the "Fugitive,"

and the adventures of the heroine exhibited the person of Mrs. Jordan rather than her peculiar merits as an actress. She elopes with a lover, whose joy has incapacitated him from conducting his mistress in safety; she falls into a variety of snares, and keeps up a steady hue and cry after her till the last act, when the usual reconciliations produce the usual close. Miss Herbert, a character for the nonce, not, perhaps, the most natural in the world, from mere sympathy with the fugitive, feigns herself a passion for Lord Dartford, simply to take him out of Julia Wingrove's way; reasons with her brother, whom she loves, and is the best friend in the world to her, and, through the whole comedy, never speaks a single word to this object of her solicitude. Like the great majority of English playwriters, Mr. Richardson has no organisation of his materials and no originality in his incidents; he conceives character, but merely as vehicles for the author's sentiments.

Of his "Admiral" I have spoken in another place, and shall here, therefore, merely notice a generous and pointed sentence, which he has put into the mouth of Miss Herbert. Young Wingrove, when urged to excuse his sister's disobedi-

ence as similar only to his own, ventures to reply, "My sister, ma'am, is a woman!" The sarcasm of Miss Herbert is thus expressed:

"*Miss Herb.* My sister, ma'am, is a woman! that is, my sister is an interdicted being — disinherited by nature of her common bounties — a creature with regard to whom engagements lose their faith and contracts their obligations. In your fictitious characters as lovers, you endeavour to make us believe that we are exalted above human weaknesses; but in your real characters as men, you more honestly demonstrate to us that you place us even below your own level, and deny us the equal truth and justice that belongs alike to all intelligent beings."

Richardson, like Sheridan, got his love of pointed sentences from Junius, whose tune was continually in their ears. Had Sheridan come a very few years earlier into the world, he would have been a capital competitor in the list of candidates for the honour of writing the letters signed by that name, but at fifteen the thing was impossible.

On the 28th of June of the present year Sheridan met with a loss that, in spite of his careless habits, hung heavily upon his mind for years, — the death of his first wife, the eldest daughter of Mrs. Linley, of Bath. She had married Mr. Sheridan on the 24th of April, 1773, and his ardour as a

lover was quite commensurate with the personal, mental, and vocal captivations of the lady. He had sighed for her, fought for her, wrote for her, and, but for the distracting solicitations of party, ambition, and the theatre, might have mingled his own genius with hers in a retirement sufficient alike for happiness and respectability; a delicate frame might have been spared many annoyances to which it was subjected, and she might have long been continued to society and her family. She died at the Hotwells, Bristol, of a deep decline, and excited the sorrow of every muse. That of Doctor Harrington, in a language devoted to distinguished inscription, supplied the following epitaph:

"In obitum
Dom. ELIZ. SHERIDAN,
Forma, voce, atque ingenio,
Inter ornatas ornatissimæ,
Ab imo amores ita suspirat amicus.
Eheu! eheu! lugeant mortales!
Eja, vero gaudeant cœlestes!
Dulces ad amplexus
Socians jam citharæ melos,
Redit pergrata,
En! iterum soror;
Suaviusque nil manet
Hosannis."

TRANSLATION.

"Sure every beauty, every grace
Which other females share,
Adorn'd thy mind, thy voice, thy face,
Thou fairest of the fair!
Amidst the general distress,
O let a friend his grief express!

"Mourn, mourn your loss, ye mortals, mourn —
Rejoice, ye heavenly choir!
To your embraces see return
A sister with her social lyre;
Eliza now resumes her seat,
And makes your harmony complete."

She is perpetuated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in a picture beyond any praise of mine; an exquisite likeness of her person, and combining all the poetry of art with the richest treasures of the palette. Mr. Burke, who enjoyed above other men the power of happy expression, said of his friend's portraits, "that they remind the spectator of the invention of history, and the amenity of landscape. In painting portraits, he appeared not to be raised upon that platform, but to descend to it from a higher sphere."

The remains of Mrs. Sheridan rest in the cathedral of Wells, in the same vault with those of her beloved sister, Mrs. Tickell, who by a few years

preceded her. Of the gifted family of Linley it may truly be said, in the exquisite lines of Thomson:

> "As those we love decay, we die in part,
> String after string is sever'd from the heart;
> 'Till loosen'd life, at last but breathing clay,
> Without one pang, is glad to fall away."

We had recently lost, also, the great painter we have just mentioned; and among all the admirers of Mrs. Jordan he was the most fervent. They indeed worshipped at the same altar, and Nature was the incessant study of them both. The painter and the actress were alike offended by affectation and false action. Sir Joshua studied children with the greatest care, when they imagined themselves unobserved, and could permit to every part of the frame its unrestrained genuine motion. He was quite enchanted, therefore, with a being who, like Jordan, ran upon the stage as a playground, and laughed from sincere wildness of delight. He said "she vastly exceeded everything that he had seen, and really was what others only affected to be." The friend to whom he thus expressed himself had but just arrived in town, and, struck by his enthusiasm, said to him, "What, sir, greater than your friend Mrs. Abington?" "Yes, sir,"

said Sir Joshua, "greater than Mrs. Abington, wherever she challenges comparison." "Well," rejoined his friend, "at all events you must not forget the more extended range of Mrs. Abington, — her fine lady." "I do not forget the fine lady of Mrs. Abington, it is never to be forgotten. I spoke of the two actresses where they challenged comparison; but as to more extensive range, I do not know that you can make out your point, for, opposed to these fashionable ladies, you have the fashionable men of Mrs. Jordan, and the women who would pass for men, whether Wildairs or Hypolitas, in comedy, and the tender and exquisite Viola of Shakespeare, where she combines feeling with sportive effect, and does as much by the music of her melancholy as the music of her laugh."

His friend told me that he took Sir Joshua's recommendation, and hastened to become acquainted with the great comedian, who assumed full possession of his heart, and her impression is little weakened at the present hour. I inquired now more particularly whether she had ever sat to Sir Joshua, or he had made any sketch of her? He told me decidedly not; and therefore we must be indebted to Romney for preserving her

likeness with an action full of sprightliness and grace, and that sufficiently early in her career to want nothing as to the exterior of the Country Girl; for, as to the interior, the actress did not yield much to time, and the mind and the laugh of her teens seemed always at her command.

Mrs. Jordan in the autumn of 1792 was compelled to unwilling retirement from her professional duties. She miscarried on the 6th of August, at Petersham, of a daughter, being at the time far advanced in her pregnancy. It was in the month of September following that she came to the play at Richmond, to see Mrs. Litchfield, then a young actress, perform the part of Julia, in the "Surrender of Calais." She was so pleased with that lady's fine voice and spirited manner, that she applauded her vehemently; indeed, so unguardedly, as to break the gold chain to which a royal portrait was suspended, and cause it to fall upon the stage from the box just over it. She did not appear in the season of 1792–93 until the 25th of February, in the oratorio period; and then she carried her point against Kemble, and brought out a new comedy, called "Anna," which the manager considered to be an outrageous insult to

his authority. It was said to be written by a Miss Cuthbertson, with a few touches from Jordan's own pen. I never knew decidedly that the play was rightly fathered upon either lady; the Jordan, however, evidently brought it forth. Disputes ran very high about this play. Mrs. Jordan called for novelty — Kemble thought that she, like himself and his sister, should be contented with the sterling drama, by which they had acquired their reputations, and that the novelty should only as entertainment hold up the train. He threatened to resign his office if that play was done: it was only done once, and thus the great disputants both triumphed — how far the reported displeasure of Kemble contributed to the fate of the play, may be a question; I should not be disposed to carry in this way a point against him, or a slighter man, who was a manager.

The only thing I should have considered in Mrs. Jordan's situation, was, how the play was written. There is not the slightest novelty in "Anna." There is an amorous old dowager, and the more seasonable passion of two young ladies — but the whole family are Touchwood's. There was the old disguise for Mrs. Jordan's figure, and the charm which admitted of no disguise, a musical call upon

her voice. To excite her lover's jealousy, she in the male habit sings a love-song to herself, under her own window, and is, by the usual clear-sighted lover of the stage, immediately taken for a dangerous rival, and a challenge, and its consequence, a meeting, follow, as things of course; they rush not on, but into each other's arms, and a most generous brother (things fancied every day) makes a handsome provision for both parties. There is a Miss Harcourt in "Anna," perhaps because there was a Miss Herbert in the "Fugitive," and Mrs. Powell was charged with the former lady, as Miss Farren had been with the latter. Mrs. Jordan spoke an epilogue of a very ponderous nature on the subject of novelty, which should seem to have had some newspaper origin, as may be seen by its only points.

> "*Posts* against *Heralds* wage their paper war —
> The *Sun* just rising, and the falling *Star*."

And again, a few lines on, —

> "The *World* and *Times* are grown as dull as *Posts*."

The town, however, were delighted to see their gay comedian returned to them after a severe illness, and she soon reconciled herself to her old parts, since newer could not be found for her.

Mrs. Siddons's turn for novelty next came on, and the subject was "Ariadne." Murphy had kept this tragedy long by him, and even printed it before it was acted. Like most French tragedy, it was cold and weak, declamatory and measured in its effects, and better suited to the form and style of Mrs. Yates than those of Mrs. Siddons, who was rather Roman than Grecian, like her brother. When we read of the astonishing impression made by the French actresses, La Champmêlé, Le Couvreur, Dumesnil, Clairon, and some few others, we must always recollect the manner in which they warm those tirades of description, or metaphysical analyses, that unfold a passion, rather than present it in operation. We are not fond of fifty lines together, even when they are Shakespeare's, and have little delight in the sonorous modulations of mere eloquence. We know nothing of heathen mythology in its great influence, and the incestuous Phédre would in vain mention the goddess of beauty to our ears as the inspirer of her passion. I am serious in asserting that the following lines could never excite the cries of rapture in a British theatre that they have so constantly produced in the Théâtre Français; whether from vanity or taste, the French are the

modern Athenians. It is the sister of Ariadne who speaks.

"Je respirois, Oenone, et depuis son absence,
Mes jours moins agités couloient dan l'innocence.
Soumise à mon epoux, et cachant mes ennuis,
De son fatal hymen je cultivois les fruits;
Vaines precautions! cruelle destinée!
Par mon epoux lui-même à Trézene amenée,
J'ai revû l'ennemi que j'avois éloigné;
Ma blessure trop vive aussi-tôt a saigné;
Ce n'est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachée,
C'est Venus toute entière â sa proie attachée."

— *Phédre, by Racine.*

This shameless passion of maturity would excite laughter among us; and the more heroic the form of the speaker, the less should we excuse it. Such a passion could only be borne, if at all, in the melancholy garb of penitence, hardly announced to be intelligible to the hearer, and succeeded by unappeasable despair! I run over the close in such English as occurs at the moment:

"O vain precautions! cruel destiny!
Theseus, my husband, brings him to Trezene,
Once more I view the foe I had remov'd;
Again gush'd from my wound its crimson flood;
No longer now a smother'd ardour beat,
But Venus fir'd my veins, and revell'd in her prey."

But the "Rival Sisters" had nothing of this brilliant kind. I never thought Mrs. Siddons herself in very modern tragedy. She was best where she had to strive against the fame of other performers — to weigh their different notions, and determine on her own judgment, which, out of many, was the true manner. She acted Ariadne, I think, six times.

Miss Farren, the third great moving power in the theatre, had a new character, though under "False Colours;" for such was the name of a five-act comedy, written by Mr. Morris, a gentleman and a scholar, and a Templar, which was long but another term for a wit. He, perhaps, wrote rather too rapidly for duration; but he lived his nine nights, and then yielded up the field to other adventurers of no greater force.

Mrs. Jordan, on her benefit night, indulged herself and her friends with a performance of Lady Restless, in Murphy's "All in the Wrong," and the "Devil to Pay" for her farce. In Nell there could be no difference of opinion. In Lady Restless, and parts of that rank, I never could think her superior to other women. Milton, in his "Comus," has a very happy expression upon a very different occasion. He

says that the earth, if we were uniformly temperate, would —

"Be strangled with her waste fertility."

I always thought this the case with the beautiful form of Mrs. Jordan, when enveloped in the garments of a woman of fashion — a train, except of admirers, was a thing she had no skill in managing. Alert in every action, she kicked it hastily out of her way. She had not the height that may properly be said to command such an appendage — it wanted balance accordingly. The endeavour to give this by lofty feathers always fails. The face, which should be everything, is lost under the waving plumage, supported by its cushion of powdered hair. I am no great admirer of revolutions, but that of France referred our ladies happily to the statues of the Greeks, rather than the dressed dolls of the milliners, and for many years they bore some evidences of the real human figure about them. They have now gone to the times of Queen Elizabeth for sleeves, which, by their enormous swell and the slender bone at the bottom of them, put all definement of their arms out of the question, and the ingenious artist, who represents human figures by coal-scuttles

and gridirons, sauce-pans, horse-combs, and extinguishers, might express the outward sign of the female arm by a stick with a bladder tied to the end of it. But we see renewal even in change itself.

Cumberland, as a man of letters, far exceeded all his dramatic cotemporaries. His origin, the great fame of his ancestors, his advantages as to education, and, to do him justice, an application that yielded only to that of Doctor Watson at college, had placed him in no mean rank as a scholar; and he had a readiness in the application of his power that somewhat justified Doctor Johnson's theory, that a man can walk as well to the east as to the west. How well he may walk, depends upon his training, and the original make and muscle of the limb. Critic, essayist, dramatist, novelist, polemic, and, as a poet, tragic, comic, and epic, he exhausted all the literary adjectived nouns or nouns adjective in *ic* or *ist;* and this universality has failed to attain the first rank, let alone the first place, in anything. His quantity was prodigious, and he threw his pieces up like mushrooms, in a few hours. His language was always perspicuous, usually delicate and neat, sometimes pointed and brilliant. He wrote for

either theatre, and in the present year, 1793, he had constructed for Covent Garden an opera on the subject of Wat Tyler. This the aspen nerve of my old friend the licenser, Mr. Larpent, unwilling to alarm the civic chair by any call for an exertion of the mace in a new rebellion, proscribed with that official fiat, which is expurgatory in literature, Heaven knows! anything but classical. In cutting out the treason, Cumberland, oddly enough, says he cut out all the comedy; and thus joined himself to those who have nothing good in their pieces but what is objectionable. Instead of the Tyler, we have an armourer, called Furnace, who furnishes out the business of the play by hammering professionally one Bluster on the head, who was attempting to carry off another Rosamond, for the Earl of Suffolk, in the days of Richard the Second.

Cumberland's armourer lived three days, and then gave way, as he said truly, to fashionable levities. But he was hurt still more on the 18th of the same month of April, by the brilliant success of Reynolds in his third comedy, called, with great propriety, "How to Grow Rich." The dreamers of the old school seem to have settled their notion of what they called legitimate comedy somewhere

about the "Conscious Lovers;" they were to be regulated by a receipt, and made like other stale and tiresome amusements, as they had ever been in the days of yore. To "eye nature's walks, to shoot folly as it flies," to present to the audience of the modern stage anything seen in modern life, was somehow or other converted into a crime by these critical playwrights, and the most amusing, if not most instructive of modern authors, has literally been persecuted for painting accurately what he saw before him. The "Terence of England," forsooth! the "mender of hearts," was excessively illiberal through life, and affected to think my ingenious and pleasant friend a mere idler of the garden, who under the awful roof of Drury would be hooted ignominiously from the stage. But in reference to the present play, where could a comic satirist find more legitimate prey (if that is the word) than the infamous faro banks, that were now exciting the avarice and racking the nerves of what should be the purest, as it is certainly the fairest part of the creation? What more morally in harmony, than the gibbeting a scoundrel bailiff to infamy, who opened his luxurious retirements to profligate gamblers, and taught the dishonest of high life how the defiance of injured

creditors and splendid accommodation might be enjoyed together?

As to Mr. Lewis and his padded Epilogue, I can only say that I never heard such roars of laughter in a theatre; and the notion, though hazardous, was lucky; but it was safe by what had prepared its way: the temper of the house had been worked up to it. Had it followed a dull comedy, Lewis must have kept the pad in his pocket — to have but named it might have been fatal. It was encored like a favourite air, "Pray Goody," by Sinclair, or any other vocalist equally sweet and natural, if there be one. Aye, and a third time! but that exceeded Mr. Lewis's complaisance, and the pad carried him off, or he the pad, in measureless content. I really was almost as happy as the author.

CHAPTER X.

History of Drury Lane Theatres — Their Origin in the Cockpit, a Little Before the Retirement of Shakespeare — Destroyed by a Mob in 1617 — The Phœnix Built in the Same Spot — Its Preservation in the Great Rebellion — Rhodes, the Bookseller, and His Two Apprentices, Betterton and Kynaston — Obtains a License First for the Phœnix, and Then Joins D'Avenant in Lincoln's Inn Fields — A New Theatre Erected by Killigrew in Drury Lane — Opened in 1662; Burnt Nine Years Afterward — A Church Brief Granted on This Calamity — Sir Christopher Wren Builds Once More upon the Old Spot — The Advantages of His Plan Displayed by Colley Cibber — Apology for Its Plainness in a Prologue and Epilogue by the Great Dryden, Spoken at Its Opening in 1674 — Union of the Two Companies in Drury Lane Theatre — Christopher Rich, Patentee — Silenced by the Chamberlain — Patents Dormant — Sir Richard Steele's License to Himself, Wilks, Booth, and Cibber — Mr. Highmore — Mr. Fleetwood —The Illustrious Garrick Becomes Purchaser with Mr. Lacy — Twenty Years' Splendour of Old Drury — On the Great Actor's Retirement, Sheridan Succeeds Him — At Length the House is Taken Down — Author's Regard for It, and Personal Acquaintance with Its Merits and Its Defects — Presages on Its Fall.

THE Drury Lane company acted under the management of Mr. Colman at the Little Theatre from the beginning of the season 1793–94 until their own theatre was ready for them. It looked a mere continuation of

a summer season, and merits no particular survey. Until, therefore, we have Mr. Holland's splendid palace to walk into, we shall fill what may be called the vacant space by inquiring what theatres or playhouses ever stood upon or near the site of the late theatre of Drury Lane.

The reader will not be surprised to find a cockpit produce a playhouse — to cut off a segment of the circle, and apply a scaffolding of some depth as well as width provides easily in the daytime for both spectators and performers. The cockpit was present to the mind of Shakespeare when he opened the warlike play of "Henry the Fifth."

> "Can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France?"

But Shakespeare's playhouses were the Globe, a summer, and the Blackfriars, a winter quarters. The cockpit in Drury Lane dates somewhere about the period of his retirement from the scene, for in 1617 it was destroyed by the rabble, though newly erected, and all its apparatus along with the building. The new edifice on the same spot was called the Phœnix, which fabulous bird it bore in front for a sign, and thus pointed to a conflagration as well as a renewal. It stood opposite the Castle Tavern, and weathered the great rebellion

as to its exterior, though the saints were far too pure to allow a representation within of the tragedies of any other age.

The actors there, while we had a stage, were called the queen's servants in the reign of James the First until Queen Anne died in 1619. They then became the Lady Elizabeth's; and when Charles the First married Henrietta of France, they were styled the queen's servants again. It is probable that Sir William d'Avenant, some time before the Restoration, both at the Phœnix and within the city walls, invited those who had not totally been canted out of all rational enjoyment to some mixed species of entertainment. But with the actual return of the king, all restraint being removed, Rhodes, a bookseller who had conducted the wardrobe of the Blackfriars during the long reign of Fletcher, and had kept his fondness alive through the dreary interval, fitted up the cockpit once more, and got together a company, some of whom he had contributed, it is probable, to form, for Betterton and Kynaston had been his apprentices. Rhodes, when Betterton was bound to him, lived near Charing Cross, and it is fairly presumable that his former station in the playhouse and his congenial business led him to pre-

serve much stage literature from destruction; so that when at length a complete collection was attempted, the stores of Rhodes would supply the Herringman's with the quarto plays, which he had so frequently dressed from the wardrobe he superintended. One can hardly forbear to imagine the ardour of our two youths invading the repose of these silent plays, and at a favourable season drawing from their good-humoured master some notions as to the various talents by which so much genius was illustrated. In 1659, when Rhodes got his license, Betterton was out of his time as a bookseller; but a hint from his old master brought him again into his service, and he could not have met with a better guide as to the business of the stage. Betterton applied himself to the works of Fletcher with uncommon ardour, and was speedily followed as the genuine successor of the heroes of the Blackfriars in his "Loyal Subject," "Wild-goose Chase," "Spanish Curate," and the immense variety which he had composed.

When D'Avenant and Killigrew obtained their two patents, Rhodes thought it idle to stand out upon his license at the Phœnix, and his company joined that with which D'Avenant opened the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the style of

the duke's servants. The superior title followed the patent of Killigrew, the "king's servants;" and they at first acted in a house situated near Clare market. However, finding this building ill adapted to the purposes of playing, they resolved to return to the old spot, and erected a new and convenient theatre in Drury Lane. It was opened on the 8th of April, 1662. But theatres have been combustible from their origin, and this new and sumptuous building was totally consumed in the month of January, 1671–72. So rapid and fierce was the conflagration that between fifty and sixty adjacent houses were either burnt or blown up.[1] We have so far benefited by experience that the adjacent buildings now suffer less by the destruction of our theatres, though their condemnation to the flames seems to be almost a patent right, and a danger attached to the privilege.

[1] The union of Church and king is usual, perhaps indissoluble, but that of Church and theatre little to be looked for in any age. A brief, however, was actually read through the kingdom for the benefit of our stage sufferers. The register of Symonsbury, in the county of Dorset, has the following liberal entry:

"Ann. 1673, April 27th. Collected by brief, for the Theatre Royal in London, being burnt, the sum of Two Shillings.

"JOHN WAY, *Curate.*
"JAMES MOREY, } *Churchwardens.*"
"GEORGE SEAL, }

The proprietors were not discouraged as to the seat of the Muses, and determined, with all the care they could take, to rebuild on the ancient spot. They consulted Sir Christopher Wren upon the subject, and put themselves with full confidence in the hands of that great man. He produced a plan which combined every advantage to both actor and spectator, and was deliberately approved and adopted by men of the soundest judgment. The king himself, by command, had sanctioned the plain, unornamented style of the building; and the rule that pleasure, as we advance in intellect, proceeds from the eye to the ear, seemed to have dictated all the internal arrangements of the architect. Cibber, who knew it in its perfection, before avarice had spoiled it, thus contrasts its appearance forty years before the time in which he was then writing: "The area or platform of the old stage projected about four feet forwarder in a semi-oval figure, parallel to the benches of the pit; the former lower doors of entrance for the actors were brought down between the two foremost (and then only) pilasters; in the place of which doors now the two stage boxes are fixed. Where the doors of entrance now are, there formerly stood two additional side

wings, in front to a full set of scenes, which had then almost a double effect in their loftiness and magnificence. By this original form the usual station of the actors in almost every scene was advanced at least ten feet nearer to the audience than they now can be, because, not only from the stage's being shortened in front, but likewise from the additional interposition of those stage boxes, the actors (in respect of the spectators that fill them) are kept so much more backward from the main audience than they used to be; but when the actors were in possession of that forwarder space to advance upon, the voice was then more in the centre of the house, so that the most distant ear had scarce the least doubt or difficulty in hearing what fell from the weakest utterance; all objects were thus drawn nearer to the sense; every painted scene was stronger; every grand scene and dance more extended; every rich or fine coloured habit had a more lively lustre; nor was the minutest motion of a feature (properly changing with the passion or humour it suited) ever lost, as they frequently must be in the obscurity of too great a distance: and how valuable an advantage the facility of hearing distinctly is to every well-acted scene, every common spectator

is a judge: a voice scarce raised above the tone of a whisper, either in tenderness, resignation, innocent distress, or jealousy suppressed, often has as much concern with the heart as the clamorous passions; and when on any of these occasions such affecting speeches are plainly heard, or lost, how wide is the difference, from the great or little satisfaction received from them."

This great man (for the reader must pardon, on this occasion, my utter contempt for Pope's injustice) well understood the subject, and spoke as an actor who had personally felt the happy effects resulting from Wren's original plan. The royal injunction was, probably, in exact conformity with the taste of the architect, who said with Shylock:

> "Let not the glare of shallow foppery enter
> My sober dwelling."

D'Avenant, with the second patent, had at length settled in Dorset Gardens, and was turned by nature to decoration. The "true state of man" seemed to him bare and wretched; he loaded building with ornament, covered the stage with tawdry procession and new invented machinery; imagined even the full fables of Shakespeare's age deficient in effect: clapt two plays

together, and re-wrote passages that should have been more particularly sacred to him as the godson of Shakespeare; "and if the rest be true which we have heard," this *degener* Neoptolemus became the decided enemy of simplicity and genuine nature in the drama:

> "Teem'd with new monsters, which the modest earth
> Had to the marbled mansion, all above,
> Never presented."

In this course of its patent rival, the new theatre in Drury Lane opened on the 26th of March, 1674, and to their disgrace apologised for the plainness which was their real excellence. They even pleaded the royal order as extenuation, and showed their envy by adverting to the encouragement which the public, as they admitted, had bestowed upon the scenery and decorations of the other house.

Not contented with the authority of the throne, they procured the "Patriarch of Poetry" to state their case for them, and a few extracts from Dryden's prologue on the occasion will show what the plainness was of which they complained:

> "A plain-built house, after so long a stay,
> Will send you half unsatisfied away;

When, fall'n from your expected pomp, you find
A bare convenience only is design'd;
You, who each day can theatres behold,
Like Nero's palace, shining all with gold,
Our mean ungilded stage will scorn, we fear;
And for the homely room disdain the cheer.

. . . . . .

"For fame and honour we no longer strive,
We yield in both, and only beg to live:
Yet, if some pride, with want, may be allow'd,
We, in our plainness, may be justly proud —
Our royal master will'd it should be so.

. . . . . .

"While scenes, machines, and empty operas reign,
And for the pencil you the pen disdain:
'Tis to be fear'd —
That, as a fire the former house o'erthrew,
Machines and tempests will destroy the new."

Dryden, luckless Dryden, here for his price attacked himself. He and D'Avenant absolutely wrote and contrived this "Tempest," which was then acting at Dorset Gardens. The new house had, however, some merits, and Dryden's epilogue shall tell us what they were:

"Our house relieves the ladies from the frights
Of ill-pav'd streets, and long dark winter nights.
The Flanders horses, from a cold, bleak road,
Where bears, in furs, dare scarcely look abroad."

However, he has one capital hit at the Dorset Garden Minerva. That theatre was adorned with the portraits of all our great poets, a matchless decoration!

> "Though in their house the Poets' heads appear,
> We hope we may presume their wits are here."

I should like, as a matter of curiosity, to know, under D'Avenant's eye, what likeness of Shakespeare his theatre exhibited.

There was not, in this great city, at that time, sufficient encouragement to support two patent theatres, which, after a few years' struggle, united the two companies under the roof of Wren's theatre. After sundry changes both patents came into the possession of Christopher Rich, but on his misconduct in the management, the chamberlain silenced him in the year 1709; from which time the Drury Lane company ceased to act under the authority of either Killigrew or D'Avenant's patents. But in the first year of the reign of George I. a license was granted to Sir Richard Steele for his life, and, three years afterward, to establish a company under the management of himself, Wilks, Booth, and Cibber. From this period may be dated the vast ascendency of Drury Lane theatre. The death of the two former pro-

Sir Richard Steele

Engraved in mezzotint by I. Smith, from the painting by Jonathan Richardson (1712)

prietors, and the secession of the two latter, however, shook the concern to its centre, and the property passed into the hands of Mr. Highmore, who ruined himself in the speculation. The theatre was now bought by Mr. Fleetwood, another architect of ruin. But the brightest star in the theatrical firmament soon became stationary over Old Drury, and, in 1747, Mr. Garrick's amazing talent, and Mr. Lacy's care, commenced a period the most brilliant which ever occurred in stage-management, and of which the providence was equally conspicuous with the genius. The twentieth year beheld the setting of the great luminary we have mentioned, and the theatre enjoyed the promise of a new but somewhat different splendour. Mr. Sheridan, in 1776, became proprietor of the concern ; for of his partners it is unnecessary to speak. His eccentric, brilliant, but yet unsteady course, if it satisfied himself, was little calculated to emulate the management of Garrick — as a statesman, he lived without office, and with only the fame of eloquence ; as a poet, he depended upon the display made in his youth, and which his most pressing and vital interest could not induce him to repeat ; he had even the powers of a man of business, but he

exerted them too seldom tc have much efficacy in his concerns. Where Garrick amassed a splendid fortune, Sheridan accumulated nothing but debt; and he sealed his fate by the encumbrances which the building of a national theatre upon a vast scale necessarily fastened upon the concern.

After showing the succession to the property, there are yet a few particulars to notice as to the Old Drury. After standing near 120 years, it was at last taken down. The complaint of Cibber regarded the position of the stage. He does not charge the alterations with anything beyond trying to contain a greater number of spectators. It is rare, I think, for a house to change its whole character in its alterations. Garrick received it a plain theatre, and the Adamses, by their improvements, certainly did not greatly decorate it. To the last, for I can bring it very accurately to my mind's eye, it was a plain theatre as to its interior. It had the common defect of all our theatres except the Opera House, namely, that the pit doors of entrance were close to the orchestra, and, as they did not choose to leave the most valuable part of the house without its complement, and there was no mode of forcing the people who sat

at a distance to inconvenience themselves, the doorkeepers, by the box-screw, kept winding in their late arrivals; and the pressure into the mass close to it, already ill at ease, and dreading a new attack every moment from a rushing current of cold air, which ushered in the stranger, occasioned fits among the women, and fights among the men, while the stage and the boxes alike suspended every other amusement but looking on till silence was restored.

Over this "perturbed spirit" I have seen the solemn countenance of Kemble bent with calm attention, and the assumed sympathy of Palmer bow with graceful ambiguity. Mrs. Siddons had somewhat more difficulty, for she could not be sure always whether the disturbance arose from the desire to see her, or the hysteric results of that painful pleasure. Miss Farren, on these occasions, relaxed the lovely smile which usually sat upon her features, and looked among her fashionable friends for pity that she should be so annoyed. Mrs. Jordan saw it with the eyes of the character she most commonly performed, and, at the first symptom of composure below, started off into the sprightly action and the unfailing laugh which she had only to will and they obeyed.

It was into this theatre that Garrick introduced the French improvement of the trap or floating-light in front of the stage, screened from the spectators, and reflected upon the actor. Undoubtedly it alters the course of nature, and casts shadow upward — it displays the hollows which expression would wish to soften, and so far is decidedly unpicturesque. But no artist has yet been able to throw sufficient light downwards, and not lengthen the shadows beyond the proper measure, and the glittering chandelier, when lowered, is always wished away by those seated above, so that we are likely to remain as we are in the illumination of our theatres.

The parting with Old Drury was a subject of real grievance to many of its steady frequenters — they looked upon its limits as hallowed, and its form as prescriptive; they shrunk from the approaches of opera and spectacle. They said it was the naturalisation of foreign habits, which would debase, if they did not destroy, the plain substance of our native tragedy and comedy.

CHAPTER XI.

The Grand National Theatre — Description of It — Opening with Sacred Music — First Play Acted on the 21st of April — Innovations of Mr. Kemble in "Macbeth" — The Bell — The Dagger — The Ghost of Banquo — Musical Witches — Charles Kemble — Securities from Fire — Reservoir — Iron Curtain — Mere Tricks — The Vanity of Speculative Science — Mrs. Jordan not Employed — Kemble — Miss Farren Does the Honours — Fitzpatrick — G. Colman — Mr. Cumberland's Comedy of the "Jew" — The Gratitude of Israel — Kemble's "Lodoiska" — Three Farces Three Days Together — Mrs. Jordan Acts for the Widows and Orphans Made on the 1st of June — Three Farces Again, and for Four Days — Harris *versus* Kemble — In the Summer, John Bannister at Liverpool — Winter of 1794–95 — Mrs. Davenport — A Shilling Gallery Put Up — "Emilia Galotti" at Drury — "Nobody" — Mrs. Jordan's Fright — The "Rage" — The "Wedding Day" of Mrs. Inchbald — Mrs. Jordan's Portrait Seen Again by the Author, Forty Years after It Was Painted — Her Helena — "Measure for Measure" — Miss Mellon — Mrs. Coutts — The Duchess — Miss Arne — "Alexander the Great," a Ballet.

THE architect of the Grand National Theatre, language suited to the revolutionary ideas then prevailing, had entirely, here, given up the plan on which he had constructed the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,

which displayed, internally, a sort of Dutch bulge to its tiers of boxes, not unlike the marine style of that solid people. He aimed at the substantial where his space was confined, and at the light and lofty where he had no limitations but his own feeling. Looking to the long-established characters of the two companies, one might have expected him to reverse such an arrangement, and bestow his levity on Mr. Harris. However, the facts admit of no question; they have both experienced the same fate — not a vestige of either theatre remains.

The new Drury had very little frontage to its boxes, and the divisions between them were only shoulder high, so that there was no difficulty in being seen or seeing. The covings of the upper tier were lofty arches of the pointed order. There were eight private boxes on the stage, and eight dull and inconvenient slips, also called private, on each side of the pit. It was at times difficult to keep the standers in the pit from trespassing on their fronts, and their hats, and sometimes greatcoats, on a wet evening, made the secluded gentry doubtful whether they could enjoy their privilege unmolested. The tiers were not left without some seeming support, and the most

delicate candelabra of cast iron, fluted, and silver lacquered, resting on the most elegant feet, at intervals satisfied both the fancy and the eye. Well relieved cameos, by Rebecca, ornamented the fronts of the boxes; the designs, which, however, could not be inspected, were from Ovid. The four tiers of boxes, light as they seemed, would absolutely contain 1,828 persons; the pit, 800; the two shilling gallery, 675; and the shilling summit, or Olympus, 308; making a grand total of 3,611 persons, who, if they all paid, sent no less a sum than £826 6*s*. into the treasury for one night's amusement. I hesitate not to say that there was comfort in every part of this theatre. Mr. Holland had not crippled his gallery friends by any necessity for stooping that they might see. The beautiful dome over the pit was positively at the height of fifty-six feet and a half from its floor. The pit itself had twenty-five seats, and its depth from the orchestra was fifty-four feet; its width, from side-box to side-box, forty-six feet. The curtain on the stage measured a space of forty-three feet, and its height was thirty-eight feet. All this gives an impression of vastness, which was never felt inside; and there was a peculiarity about this edifice that took away the chilling effect

when subjected sometimes to a thin audience: a few persons could seem to people the structure.

The exterior of this theatre was never completed. To put the house in a condition to admit the public was the one thing needful; what remained could be revived from time to time as a subject of conversation, and dropped when it had answered the purpose of a "note of preparation" for the annual opening. But, indeed, to give room for the whole design, the neighbourhood ought to have been changed, and the street thrown back to the north, and the miserable courts to the south swept away. To the west only is there even tolerably free access for carriages.

After a reasonable course of sacred music in Lent, always improper as amusement, this theatre, on the 21st of April, opened for its legitimate objects, and the great object of Kemble's policy, as well as taste, the representation of Shakespeare's tragedies, and the sterling comedies of every age, produced with suitable care and improvements, and followed by entertainments which should not disgrace them. He thus established Mrs. Siddons and himself in full scenic sovereignty, and if circumstances should ever provoke

him to throw up the management, a thing not beyond probability, the more desirable because less responsible predominance as to the staple of the theatre remained in Mr. Kemble and his family. The present stage required scenery certainly thirty-four feet in height, and about forty-two feet in width, so that an entire suite of new scenes was essential on great occasions, though where display was not material the old pieced flats might be run on still, and the huge gaps between them and the wings filled up by any other scenes drawn forward merely "to keep the wind away."

Dress, too, was now become a matter of no slight moment; the costume was to be accurate, which was not expensive, and the materials were to be genuine, not imitative, which certainly was expensive, and very heavily so. Mr. Kemble had studied Macbeth for the occasion as though the play had never been done before. As to the Thane of Glamis, he set at nought the prescriptive manner of Garrick and others, along with his dress, and merely inquired of the poet, and no doubt fancied him to whisper to his slumbers, how he would now direct his sublimest effort to be performed. The first innovation, of any moment, was in the soliloquy preceding the murder. Here he

altered two points, one of action, and the other of stage direction. Macbeth is on the stage, a servant attending with a torch:

"*Macb.* Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed."

And the servant goes out to do so. Now this appears to have been a signal previously agreed upon, at the hearing which Macbeth was to know that his undaunted partner had prepared everything for his hand; and the bell's ringing would excite no other attention, the servant having been told that it was to announce the spiced cup, taken always the last thing before retiring for the night. Macbeth knew that he was to despatch Duncan with the daggers of his very attendants, and his lady had placed them before him when he entered the royal apartment. This was working, naturally, upon Macbeth's imagination while he remains waiting the signal agreed upon. Hear what he fancies:

"*Macb.* Is this a dagger, which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still."

He anxiously questions the nature of that which eludes his grasp, and yet waves before his eye:

"I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use."

Mr. Kemble here drew half-way out of the scabbard the sword he wore; not the dagger, which was more constantly the companion of a chieftain's person. He would not see that "this" was this dagger, and that, though "such an instrument he was to use," it did not follow it was to be his own, which at the moment was only drawn to contrast corporeity with mere form. After satisfying himself that the bloody business alone had thus deceived his sight, Macbeth falls into the accompanying terrors of "night and silence;" and at length "a bell rings," as we are told in the only original copy of the play, and he himself adds, "The bell invites me." Mr. Kemble found in the raving slumbers of Lady Macbeth the words "One, two — why, then, 'tis time to do it;" upon which he took the clock for the warning, and adopted it as a more striking signal, and begetting a more awful attention in the audience. He was here decidedly wrong; no signal could be adopted between them of which Lady Macbeth had not the absolute command, and though the time for

doing the deed might be about two of the clock, the "moment of it" depended upon complete readiness, which could not be announced till it was perceived. The old manner of doing this is therefore right. For when "Time, with his hours, should strike two," who can tell what might have occurred? The ominous owl might have excited at least Duncan's attention, who seems not to have been drugged, like his servile attendants. The rocking earth had aroused some of the guests, and the falling chimneys Lennox and others. Lady Macbeth was to be sure of no impediment in the royal apartment, and to make the signal only on such a certainty; nay, with all her care, Macbeth, as he approached, heard two of the attendants "wake each other," and stood "listening their fear" until sleep again befriended the murderer.

The other point did not rest solely on Mr. Kemble's authority. Lloyd, the poet, in 1761, in his "Actor," that dawn of the Rosciad, thus reproves the old practice of placing Banquo in the seat of Macbeth:

> "When chilling horrors shake the affrighted king,
> And guilt torments him with her scorpion sting;
> When keenest feelings at his bosom pull,
> And fancy tells him that the seat is full;

Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place,
To frighten children with his mealy face?
The king alone should form the phantom there,
And talk and tremble at the vacant chair."

I have already said that I have nothing to do with the ridiculous mode of scenic effect. The only question is what Shakespeare himself intended, and how, without the disappearance and return of the phantom, we are to reconcile the almost momentary alarm of Macbeth a second time, when he had expelled the intruder, and, being gone, found himself again a man? When his reason and his courage have once triumphed over vacancy, how can fancy so soon repeople the void? If the answer be that preternatural power alarms the imagination here, it may as well amaze the faculty of eyes and ears; but the spectators have no means but sight of judging what is fancied by the starting murderer. In the present case he might fancy Duncan in the regal seat even more naturally than Banquo. But the poet's own direction ought for ever to silence all doubt:

"*Enter the ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth's place.*"
— *Folio, 1623.*

When he has laid his perturbation to an infirmity to which he had long been subject, and, re-

covering heart, orders some wine to be filled, that he may drink his wishes for Banquo's presence and the general joy, our genuine play again marks the entrance and the place — thus, *Enter Ghost.* We have nothing to do with the philosophy of the question, whatever it may be, but ought to give absolute visible appearance, at least to an age that did not doubt the possibility of it. The imagination here is in the poet, not the character.

There were sundry other novelties, perhaps revivals, as to the witches and their incantations; indeed the noble firmness and compactness of the action was dreadfully broken and attenuated by the vast crowds of witches and spirits that filled the stage, and thundered in the ear a music of dire potency. The auxiliary injured the principal, and Matthew Locke became the rival of his master. Mere speech, however masterly, is weak upon the ear after the noise (call it harmony if you will) of a full orchestra, and perhaps fifty voices, with difficulty kept together in tolerable time and tune. But with great readiness I submit to that public decision, which has declared this play, so furnished, the most attractive of all dramatic representations.

I have already noticed the musical junto, which, by a continual intercourse with Sheridan, constituted no inferior power to that of the manager, and so much outlay could not perhaps have been obtained for tragedy, unless it had embraced the strong plea of combination, and employed the singers of the theatre. On every other occasion, the efforts were commonly made for opera, now growing into a passion among us, fatal to the genuine produce of our drama.

It was on this night that Charles Kemble, happily rescued from the post-office, commenced in the trivial part of Malcolm his profession of an actor. He had the same preparation as his brother, a classical education, and though he shares the personal advantages of his family, seems to act fairly from himself. Not so naturally gifted for tragedy as his great brother, he is excellent in many first-rate characters of the serious muse, and, in comedy, he assumes a rank between the deliberate, studied politeness of Palmer, and the rattling caricature of a gentleman which sat so delightfully upon Lewis.

We have still something more to say as to the new theatre. The not distant destruction of the Opera House by fire had excited the attention

of scientific men to the subject; and as they could not do much in the way of prevention, since it is and will be the "property of fire to burn," they exhausted themselves, in case of accident, in modes by which the flames might be locally extinguished, and the audience, in the meantime, cut off from the stage, and, in perfect safety, either wait the result, or quietly and without precipitation walk out of the theatre. But the mistake in all these structures is the communication of the boxes themselves with the stage, and the vent afforded by the circling passages of the respective tiers. These should certainly be cut off by division-walls to the very roof, reaching from the external walls of the theatre to the frontispiece, and a strong division be also made in the very roof itself, so that the whole roof could never be on fire, nor all of it fall in at the same time. An iron curtain to drop down, and a reservoir, with pipes to play on, in all the passages, were tricks to amuse children in such matters. While the audience is in a theatre, and all is stir and vigilance in the building, all the popular danger is from themselves. Give them plenty of exits, and you do all you can do; but carelessness, either by day or night, in the workmen or watchmen of a play-

house, are the true things to guard against. Here to care nothing about expense is salvation to the concern.

However, something to excite talk and curiosity merely may be excused; I mean if we should even be of opinion that such men as Sheridan, and Holland, and Kemble, had really slender faith in any of the inventions that time so severely tried and found wanting. Mrs. Jordan had no share in the opening of the new house, so that Kemble and Miss Farren did the honours of the house-warming. A Whig prologue, written by Fitzpatrick, talked a long while about the French Revolution, and at length brought out that this building was reared in honour to somebody, and was —

"The silent tribute of surviving woe."

Ten lines further on the silence or the secret ended, and it came broadly before us in the "glories of Shakespeare's scene." At that word the audience used their hands, and Mr. Kemble made his bow. Miss Farren had another sort of task. George Colman wrote a pleasant account of all the overdoings he so much despised, and he was both pointed and intelligible. Miss Farren, though a weak speaker of rhyme and poetry at all times,

exerted herself on this brilliant occasion, and was loudly cheered. He will really dispute the point with me, but except as to "Terence," I prefer his dramatic works to his father's — Mr. Colman, the younger, has the stronger mind.

"Macbeth" was repeated on the four following nights, and yet twice more before the end of the month, and on the 2d, 5th, and 7th of May. On the 8th Mr. Cumberland's comedy of the "Jew" was acted for the first time, of which Bannister, Jr., was the benevolent Israelite. "I am ashamed to say (Mr. C. writes) with what rapidity I despatched that hasty composition." He showed it to Bannister act by act as he wrote it. Indeed, to my old friend it was a treasure just then, because it gave him the lead in a successful play, and prevented him from being smothered by the tragedies of Shakespeare, or confined to farce. When Charles Surface was ill (says Sheridan), the Jews put up prayers for him in the synagogue, and some such tributary unexpensive acknowledgments might now have been made by the Goldsmids and the Solomons to Mr. Cumberland. Of anything more solid they have hardly been accused. They have never much encouraged the theatres, except from a love of music; and then the singers were Jews

— Leoni and Braham. Mr. Cumberland deplores the "ridicule and contempt" with which they had been treated on the stage, till Sheva, as I presume he thought, did them justice. Their character is retrievable when Sheva is not extraordinary among them; in the meantime, they who worship mammon so exclusively may pass through a fire of wit to their "grim idol" without any severe mortification.

On the 9th of June Mr. Kemble brought out an afterpiece with music, which he had himself translated from the French, called "Lodoiska." There was the usual love incident for Kelly and Crouch, and a band of Tartars with Barrymore at their head, who profited greatly by the marching orders which the manager knew so well how to carry, by doing the business himself before them. He got everybody readily to act parts in it, and in dress, and scenery, and music it was a perfect, spirited thing. Cumberland, now all acquiescence, cut away an act from his "Natural Son;" and this four-act play and an entertainment were then thought sufficient amusement for the evening. The want of Mrs. Jordan began now to be felt; Mrs. Siddons had not acted after the first week of June, and Kemble's management

the three last days of the month was disgraced by three farces, which I preserve as the severest degradation that the great national theatre could feel.

27th. The "Children in the Wood" — "Bon Ton" — "Lodoiska."

28th. The "Liar" — "Lodoiska" — "My Grandmother."

30th. The "Children in the Wood" — "High Life Below" — "Lodoiska."

The 2d of July was devoted to the benefit of the widows and children of the brave men who perished in Lord Howe's victory of the 1st of June. Mrs. Jordan, with the hearty consent of her illustrious naval admirer, volunteered her only performance of the Country Girl that season; Cobb, one of the readiest and most ingenious men that I have ever known in theatres, ran together a sort of second part of "No Song no Supper," very eagerly taken by the house, which distinguished itself this evening by a sea-fight, that showed all the capabilities of the stage as to scenery and machinery. The spectators coughed and enjoyed the powder. Richardson wrote a very beautiful prologue for the night, and Kemble spoke it. On another occasion, — and why not this? — The

couplet which follows I have marked as transcendently fortunate.

> "Glory itself at such a shrine may bow,
> And what is glory but a name for Howe?"

On the 3d, 4th, 5th, and 7th of the month, the town accepted of three farces as above, the "First of June" concluding each evening's entertainment.

The following season had at least a better estimate to guide it of the real force necessary in a company; some of the gas had escaped, and the grand machine was brought nearer to the earth.

Besides, Covent Garden Theatre had closed early in June, to have time for her projected alterations; for the New Drury appeared so captivating, that nothing but change had any chance with it, and Mr. Harris was not a man to be easily frightened, nor to slumber in a false security. He knew his rival thoroughly, and with all his Herculean strength, ventured to predict that he should beat him, though he possessed the Siddons, the Farren, and the Jordan.

In the summer of 1794, the Haymarket Theatre "lost half its soul" — John Bannister went to Liverpool, and Charles Kemble and Fawcett together supported his share of serious and comic

business. The author of "No Song no Supper" wrote an occasional address for Bannister, which enumerated all the parts in which he was celebrated, and to assist frail memory, I will here run them over, — Lenitive, Walter, Sheva, Robin, Trudge, Scout, Jacob, Philpot, Gradus, Vapour. But such a list is itself a proud testimony of the actor's merit. He was, in fact, the inspiring genius of our farce writers. Liverpool did him full justice, and they were no mean judges there of good acting.

Colman, this summer, was furiously attacked for playing three farces nightly at his theatre; now, the fact is, that summer amusement, like summer clothing, should never be heavy, and there such arrangements were more than excusable; they were, in some sort, preferable. At the winter theatres, with their extensive companies, such trifling should vacate the patent. But the New Drury at that time stood remarkably well with the daily press.

On the 24th of September, 1794, Mrs. Davenport, an actress of infinite talent, made her first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre, in which she acted six and thirty years. She came to London as a substitute for Mrs. Webb; but the sub-

stitute, like the soldier so called in the militia, was infinitely more fit for the duty than the overgrown original had ever been. She had a very acute perception of comic humour, and a strength and earnestness that always carried the dialogue home. Her début was in the Mrs. Hardcastle of "She Stoops to Conquer." Quick, among our actors, seemed her natural counterpart. I believe this lady, in her long professional career, gave less trouble than had ever been remarked, to either manager, actor, or author — she loved her business, and did it well and cheerfully. While thus remembering the new actress at the rival house, I must not forget the new face which the theatre itself now wore. The original deficiency of a one-shilling gallery was only to be palliated, not cured: part of the pit ceiling was cut away, to allow of a slope view of the stage, and the manager persuaded himself to think all well; but as to his galleries, he was greatly inferior to his wiser rival. He had, however, given to his boxes an appearance of solid richness — his linings, and cappings, and gilding, and ornaments were good, and everything done that could be done, within the old walls, and under the old roof. His judicious adoption of temporary light comedy, with such writers as O'Keefe, Hol-

croft, Reynolds, and afterward Morton, brought him great profits.

The Drury Lane season of 1794–95 commenced rather inauspiciously. I cannot, at this distance, recollect whose translation Mr. Kemble used of Lessing's "Emilia Galotti," but it was acted only four times, and exhibited Mrs. Siddons in a new character to little purpose. Cumberland wrote a prologue to it, and Colman an epilogue, neither of them in danger of preservation, unless the following argument for the king's humanity, which did not need one, be destined to rival the Oxonian pleasantry of Doctor Johnson:[1]

> "Is he to ruin others' children prone,
> Who has — so many children of his own?"

Mrs. Robinson this season added to the failures of the commencement a two-act comedy called "Nobody." An actress formerly herself, she had influence enough to bring the following ladies together in so mere a trifle. I remember the delight

[1] "Who drives fat oxen, should himself be fat."

As to the king's humanity, I find it questioned by the Whig critic in such matters, Coke of Norfolk; on whose authority history is to style that excellent man "the worst who ever sat upon a throne," and meriting the title of the "bloody king." His hearers, it appears, hooted the critic down; perhaps another sort of prostration might have been preferable. — Oct. 1830.

she expressed at Mrs. Jordan's heading the list, followed by Mrs. Goodall, Miss Pope, Miss Collins, Miss Heard, and Miss Decamp. I cannot detail the incidents, but I know well that to have great names for trivial business is certain death to any author. The spectators soon see that the performers are discontented in their situations, and if they condescend to them in mere kindness, it is the unkindest thing they can do. The audience soon avenge their complaisance upon the writer of the piece ; what he courted for his support shrinks from the voluntary task, and he falls, good easy man, from his confidence in hollow professions.

Our dear Mrs. Jordan had powers of kindness equal to her other gifts ; but she was not made for a storm, and grew pitiably nervous if the house showed marks of displeasure and contest, which they liberally or illiberally did in abundance on the present occasion. One might have supposed Mrs. Robinson prescient of her fate by her epilogue, for Mrs. Jordan hurried on to address the audience in the words following : " Half dead and scarce recovered from my fright." Recovered ! she was so far from being recovered that she only repeated twenty lines out of the epilogue, that had no connection with each other ; and the authoress was

indignant with manager, actress, proprietor, and even the public for not embalming "Nobody." It had a prologue as well as an epilogue, for mere verse cost her nothing. The piece was tried again, but "who can revive the dead?"

Mrs. Robinson was a good deal connected with newspapers; and as her lameness confined her to the chair when at home, she was constantly writing, and tolerably free in her remarks. This always operates mischievously upon the mind of an actor, who is quite sure that the writer turned dramatist will visit failure upon anything rather than his piece — that, in fact, had passed his tribunal before.

While this novelty was thus vainly, perhaps not seriously, tried at Drury, Mr. Harris brought out another comedy, by Reynolds, which gave a name to its own success, the "Rage." Their houses were much richer than was ever expected by the manager of Drury Lane. However, Mrs. Inchbald, almost wedded to Covent Garden, now wrote a farce for Mrs. Jordan, in which I saw her with infinite pleasure. It followed "Emilia Galotti," on the 1st of November, 1794, and was called the "Wedding Day." The scenes between Sir Adam Contest (King) and Lady Contest (Mrs. Jordan)

display some of the most pointed language in the drama, and Mrs. Inchbald fashioned every line to her peculiar manner of utterance. The interest was in a first wife's unexpected return on the very day that her old man had again united himself to a girl of eighteen. The new couple were of the Teazle family, well lowered to farce. It was in this piece that Mrs. Jordan introduced one of the wonders of her ballad style, "In the Dead of the Night," and Cupid knocked at the window, very successfully, of every creature who heard her sing it. It was almost as powerful as the Andromeda of Euripides, at Abdera; every man almost spoke, however, not iambics, but anapæsts:

"Cupid knock'd at my window, disturbing my rest."

"In every mouth, like the natural notes of some sweet melody, which drops from whether it will or no — nothing but Cupid, Cupid! The whole city, like the heart of one man, opened itself to love."

I think one of our occult sages once wrote a book called "Natural Magic;" this lady had by heart the whole volume. The melody of her voice cannot be revived; but I, this very morning, had her person and action brought truly before me by a deliberate inspection of the portrait which the

admirable Romney painted of her in the "Country Girl." It is very properly in the possession of Colonel Fitzclarence, and he may well be proud of such a treasure. There is rather more back than we should now show in lady portraits, but it is perfect as to likeness, and just as naïve as it was proper to exhibit her on canvas, where the expression cannot change. It is a figure so delightful altogether that Benedick only can express the feeling it excites:

"I will live in thy eyes, die in thy lap, and be buried in thy heart."

"Pray, sir," said a young lady to me, "was Mrs. Jordan critically handsome?" My answer was the absolute truth: "Dear madam, had you seen her as I did, the question would never have occurred to you!"

On the 12th of December, Mr. Kemble revived "All's Well that Ends Well," by Shakespeare, and acted Bertram himself, but too ill to do anything. Mrs. Jordan had here the trouble of studying Helena, and curing the King (Mr. Bensley) of a ridiculous disorder, and for a single night's performance. There is but one scene that can act upon a large stage, that of Parolles and his drum,

with which Bannister made some amusement; *au reste* there was the beauty of Miss Miller promoted from the choruses, and Mrs. Powell for the venerable Countess, who detects the passion of Helena for her son; but not a hand was raised in their favour, so that all was not well, and could not end well, for it was not repeated. Opera now took its turn, and the indefatigable Cobb brought out his "Cherokee," with all the splendours of scenery, dress, and decoration, now squandered in all directions, to the amazement of poor King, who could not command a few yards of copper lace in his management. Kemble put his brother Charles through all the ranks of the profession — here he was a friendly Indian, and coppered his skin, like the great Barrymore, and Messrs. Sedgwick and Caulfield and Phillimore. How often must he have wished himself in the post-office!

"*Uno avulso non deficit alter.*" Not at all hurt by the fall of "All's Well," on the 30th of December Kemble revived "Measure for Measure," with Mrs. Siddons in the towering virtue of Isabella, and himself in the Duke; it remained on the stage a perpetuity, finely acted throughout.

On the 31st of January, 1795, under the management of Mr. Kemble, Miss Mellon, the future Mrs.

Coutts, and the present Duchess of St. Albans (for such fortune may well render a man's style giddy), acted Lydia Languish, in the "Rivals," and obtained an engagement as an intended double for Mrs. Jordan. Miss Farren had Mrs. Goodall in the same secondary station, and Bannister, Jr., now obtained a *locum tenens* in Captain Wathen, who had long figured in private theatricals. But Miss Mellon must not be passed over so lightly. The public do not generally know that Coutts was not the first banker who had distinguished this young actress. While she was in Stanton's company, Mr. Wright, a banker at Stafford, showed her great attention; and it was creditable as well as valuable, for his wife and daughters concurred in protecting her. It was there that the member, Sheridan, saw her, and he might strengthen himself abroad and at home by giving her an immediate engagement at Drury Lane. He saw her in two of Mrs. Jordan's most favourite characters, Rosalind and the Romp. She was certainly above mediocrity as an actress, though I used to think too careless to do all she might have done. Her figure was elegant in those days, and there was a rather comic expression in her countenance. Had Jordan never appeared, she might have reached

the first rank, and been contented with her station in a theatre; few, in any kind of miscarriage, have received such ample consolation. Chance, itself, once contributed a prize of ten thousand pounds to this minion of "Fortune's Frolic." I think there seems to have been a good deal of sagacity in her conduct: she saw her object with that singleness which is necessary to all great success, and made her very disposition itself a herald to her elevation. I never thought her one of those who —

> "Plan secret good, and blush to find it fame."

But a little ostentation may be pardoned in our imperfect virtue.

The name of Arne is dear to all who love music; and great hopes were entertained that the doctor's granddaughter would augment as a singer the family honours, but her voice proved too weak for so large a theatre. Her conception of Polly was no doubt traditional, Mrs. Cibber having played the character divinely.

On the 11th of February M. d'Egville brought out his grand pantomime ballet of "Alexander the Great, or the Conquest of Persia." He here exhibited the general incidents of that conqueror's

progress, his difficulties in surmounting the apprehensions and reluctance of his army, his Amazonian alliance, his furious impetuosity at the storming of Gaza, the battle of Arbela, his treatment of Darius and his family, his triumphant entrance into Babylon, and marriage with Statira. Grandeur and magnificence, splendid scenery, graceful, energetic, expressive action, characterise this ballet throughout.

I anticipate the reader's mistake, who may suppose me to have been recording a triumph at the Opera House. This performance was at the New Drury, and designed to show all the capabilities of that vast concern. It already rivalled the Italian Opera itself, by its possession of the two Storaces, Kelly, Crouch, Mrs. Bland, and Doctor Arnold's pupil, Miss Leake; and now ballet was added to their attractions, and they defied everything like competition. For three months together this beautiful exhibition astonished and delighted the public.

CHAPTER XII.

The Death of Parsons — His Peculiar Merits — Holland and Powell — Spouting Clubs — Political Orators — Parsons and the Lion — The "Wheel of Fortune" — Madame d'Arblay — Jerningham's "Welsh Heiress," Mrs. Jordan in Plinlimmon — Drury Attacking Its Own Splendours — Chaos Umpire in the Concern — "Seven Ages" for Mrs. Siddons — "First Love," by Cumberland; Sabina Rosny, Mrs. Jordan — Her Enchanting Effect — Some Pleasing Recollections — Cumberland's Opinion of Her — Nature to Be Upheld by Mrs. Jordan — Winter of 1795-96 — The "Dependent" — The "Rival Queens" — Kemble in Alexander — Mrs. Jordan Confined — Miss Decamp in Columbine — Mrs. Jordan in Fidelia, Her Power upon Mr. Kemble — His Sense of Her Acting in the "Plain Dealer" — Gives It to the Author in the Words of Sterne — The "Iron Chest," and Its Failure — Sheridan Wished Mrs. Jordan in That Play — "Vortigern" Has That Advantage; She Acts Flavia — Ireland — Chatterton — Queen Elizabeth, Her Little Attention to Players — Mrs. Jordan Speaks Merry's Epilogue — Poor Benson's Death.

THE stage had just now sustained a loss which almost palsied comedy in the old humourists of her train. I allude to the death of Parsons on the 3d of February, 1795, in the middle of the season. He had acted his inimitable Sir Fretful Plagiary on the 19th of January, with his usual effect, though suffering perceptibly

at the time from the asthma, which had long tormented him. He told me that usquebaugh relieved him; but it quieted the irritation by slow destruction, and he was almost a shadow when he died. Nothing can be more true than the ungrateful remark that, whatever be the talent, the real or the mimic world can at least jog on without it. In the case of Parsons, I can hardly now convince myself that his place has ever been supplied. I read over the parts which he made his own, — Corbaccio, Foresight, Moneytrap, Don Manuel, Skirmish, Davy, Crabtree, Doiley, Sir Fretful Plagiary, Alscrip. I find that they still are acted, and rejoice that I have been mistaken. Parsons was born in the year 1736, and had just completed his fifty-ninth year when he quitted the scene. He was educated at St. Paul's, and intended to be an architect, but the life of his building, to use Shakespeare's language, was stolen by such assassins of business as Holland and Powell, who cast the rough honesty of Parsons in Kent, and figured away themselves in Mad Tom and Lear. However, when they came from the spouting club to the Little Theatre in 1756, the adage was verified, as to Parsons, —

"Thus safely low, my friend, thou canst not fall."

He retained his original Kent — but his friend Powell dropped from Lear to the Bastard, to rise again in good time to the elevation of the club.

The very memory of a spouting club is almost dead among us. But it was by no means a useless assemblage, either as to probation or amusement. In our youth we have visited several, and do not think that either business or morals suffered so much by them as by the more stylish amusements of the present day. And if the large rooms in houses of public entertainment are to be occupied by orators, rather than hear the Thelwall's, the Gale Jones's, the Cobbetts, and the Hunts, with the noisy company they collect about them, our choice is made : let us have the quiet refreshment "that cheers but not inebriates," and listen to even attempts, that give voice and action to the lofty sense or intense passion of Shakespeare and Otway ! Anything but this eternal destruction of the poor world's peace by the enforcement of speculative rights, never to be limited, and always contested.

We beg pardon of the great actor's memory, and return to celebrate his steady allegiance to a theatre royal. He never could be tempted to

quit the standard of his master, Garrick, and he passed as an heirloom into the possession of Sheridan.

Architecture had made Parsons at least a draughtsman, and I have seen some attempts in oil, not contemptible, from his pencil. Let me bear witness to his rich and singular power of telling a story. One of his best has been versified by a very dear old friend, and called "Parsons the Actor and the Lion;" and it is done as well as a very humourous pen can do it, but the face of the actor must be wanting — the manner of him, whose toe had touched a lion at the bed's foot — the shaggy mane — the verification of the fact — the agony of suspense — the knocks that might wake the savage to their distraction, — all this should be seen and heard, but the reader may enjoy his share of the event by turning to page 180 in the second volume of Mr. Taylor's poems.

The order of time leads me through losses that cannot be repaired and gains that are soon exhausted to the production, by Mr. Kemble, of a play by Cumberland that is still popular. I mean his "Wheel of Fortune," acted a first time on the 28th of February, 1795. It has a remarkable

similarity to Kotzebue's "Stranger," of which he might have heard some account, for, I believe, he did not read German. He seems merely to have used the hero, for Cumberland's lady is the wife of Penruddock's false friend. The deep penitence of Mrs. Haller is a striking feature in the German which is weakness itself, as hinted only, in the Woodville family. But Cumberland has a masterly improvement where he makes Penruddock unfold his wretchedness to the son of the very man who had destroyed him by treachery. Kemble played this character so as never to be forgotten; he had worked it into his heart, as if he believed it part of his own personal history; he kindled so in his course, that when he stated who had betrayed him to his brother Charles, who acted Henry Woodville, that gentleman for an instant was as an actor thrown off his poise, and rendered motionless with agony. He told me this himself, and that the frequent rehearsals had no power whatever to prepare him for the terrific energy of the disclosure before the audience.

In the "Wheel of Fortune" Miss Farren acted Lady Tempest, one of those elegant sketches of her sex that you may call by any name, very agreeable, but not striking. Mr. Cumberland

next determined to work for Mrs. Jordan, and the same season, on the 12th of May, produced his "First Love."

Madame D'Arblay tried a tragedy called "Edwy and Elgiva," of which Mr. Kemble had no opinion, though he and his sister played in it; and Mr. Jerningham, a very amiable man and a poet of some fashion, procured his "Welsh Heiress" one night's hearing; and the magic of Plinlimmon, for such was the mountainous appellation Mrs. Jordan stood under, "bowed its cloud-capt head." The characters of this play seemed to have been suggested by some of the ancient mysteries and moralities; for instance, there were in one comedy Fashion, Classical Frenzy, Fancy, and Conscience, males, performed by Barrymore, Bannister, Jr., R. Palmer, and Suett.

Barrymore, not well at home in Fashion, could not learn the prologue, and it was read in this perfect theatre; and, as if the powers of the state were in disunion, the epilogue, by Field Marshal Conway, was permitted to attack the entry of "Alexander into Babylon" and the Amazonian Nudes; though Harris, at the other house, was beggaring himself to rival its splendour by getting up Noverre's "Peleus and Thetis" in the

court of Edward the Third. Chaos was come again, and Kemble ought to have resigned at once. Even Mrs. Siddons, in the dignity of form and the power of expression able to have quelled the impostor Mahomet, assumed the juvenile Palmyra for her benefit, and acted the Emmeline of Dryden's "Arthur" after it; and Sam. Rogers, Esq., wrote an address which would have suited Jordan [1] or Farren to a tag, but rendered such a woman as Siddons insipid. Lady Macbeth and Volumnia, for "she cannot lay aside what grows to her," talking of a time —

"When the red coral rings its silver bells."

A sort of "Seven Ages" of woman, written with some neatness, but requiring much curtailment, for it was eighty-six lines. This was on the 27th of April, and on the 2d of May, poor Mrs. Powell, out of her wits for attraction to her night, appeared in Young Norval. But these "fierce vanities" disposed of, on the 12th of May "First Love" was

[1] This notion of the author's appears to have had full countenance from Mr. Rogers himself, who, in April, 1797, gave it to Reynolds for an epilogue to his comedy of the "Will," and it was then really spoken by Mrs. Jordan. Reynolds added, on the change of speaker, some breadth to the fun, for which the gay actress thought herself obliged to him.

acted at the theatre so trifled with, and displayed the skill of the veteran, good taste, and elegant diction. Two such comedies in one season are among the rarities of dramatic fertility. But Mrs. Jordan here made a beautiful display of herself. It was in a character called Sabina Rosny, whose noble parents had perished in the French Revolution, and who, alone and unprotected, had effected her escape to Italy. There, an English lord, in her own language, "basely betrayed her by a pretended marriage." Hear Mrs. Jordan utter the following:

"What can I say or do? Shall a poor alien like me contend with power like his? Your laws will not redress me; my religion is not his religion. I know not who is that Italian monk that married us — I know not where to find him; or, if I could, what then? My lord would little care for that."

This is part of a lovely scene between Sabina and Lady Ruby (Miss Farren), the first of the fourth act. I have seldom seen Miss Farren to more advantage: substantially, Lady Ruby is another Lady Emily Gayville, and Sabina is a more interesting Miss Alton. The offending Lord Sensitive has still a large fund of slumbering honour about him, that a suggestion will startle into

atonement. Lady Ruby's probe is keen enough to wake the dead. His lordship's journey to Padua is spared by a delighted sylph at his elbow, whose generous apology for her husband's error threw everybody into tears.

"*Sabina.* I know not how to call it an offence, for what am I? My fortune nothing, my nobility a shadow; a heart to honour you is all that I can boast. How, then, can I be angry, if, when returned to your own happy country, where so many fairer ladies courted your attention, you forgot poor, humble, lost Sabina."

A rival dramatist has noticed the great deficiency of comedy in this play. I know not, without being extraneous or violent, how it could have been supplied. The reader of "First Love" will hardly fail to find, with a favourite poet, —

> "The broadest laugh unfeeling Folly wears,
> Less pleasing far, than Virtue's very tears."

What little humour the author could afford us was in safe hands. Bannister, Jr., had a generous young seaman, and played it with great spirit. Suett, who acted Billy Bustler, was a nervous, but, therefore, safe actor; he always kept the line and felt the temper of the house. The Wrangler of Miss Pope was the portrait of too large a portion of fashionable women. King, Palmer, and

Wroughton were well suited, and the piece did great service to the theatre.

Upon the subject of "First Love," Mr. Cumberland thus expresses himself. "When two such exquisite actresses conspired to support me, I will not be so vain as to presume I could have stood without their help." (Mem. vol. ii. p. 281.)

But he has still more strongly marked his admiration of our Euphrosyne, in a true and melancholy revision of our stage improvements. These are his words: "If nature can hardly be upheld by Mrs. Jordan, or Shakespeare by Mr. Kemble, what author in his senses will attempt a comedy more legitimate than the 'Forty Thieves,' or a tragedy more serious than 'Tom Thumb'?" (Mem. Supplement.)

The opening of Drury Lane Theatre for the winter of 1795–96, announced the complete triumph of Cumberland's muse. He had already occupied seven nights by the three last comedies produced, when, on the 20th of October, he inconsiderately launched a fourth, called the "Dependent," of which the name, I think, only remains. This was at once withdrawn by the manager, and properly.

Besides the fair attraction of D'Egville's grand

ballet, Mr. Kemble thought himself bound to turn its decoration to account in the representation of Lee's tragedy of the "Rival Queens," he himself now performing the part of Alexander. Such an exhibition had never been witnessed in this country. It was first displayed on the 23d of November, and repeated as often as he could sustain the personal fatigue.

The female reader will thank me for telling her that Mrs. Siddons at last played Roxana without powder, and it was found that her dark hair added lustre, and even youth, to her striking features. The ladies now frequently dressed their hair *à la Grecque;* perhaps the only tasteful fashion introduced by the French reformers.

Mrs. Jordan, early in the year 1796, suffered a miscarriage, which kept her from theatrical duty about a month. She was naturally attacked by the malignant scribblers in another interest, as refusing about £150 during her absence from caprice! The fact is, that her reappearance was regulated entirely by Doctor Warren. In the meantime Miss Decamp's "Columbine" filled the twenty houses to the roof.

On the 27th of February, 1796, Mr. Kemble revived Wycherley's "Plain Dealer," and played

Manly to Mrs. Jordan's Fidelia. From their different lines he but seldom had acted with her. He now met the charmer in one of the most winning characters in our drama, and she quite subdued him.[1] He told me that she was absolutely irresistible, and I am sure he thought what he said. There had been a good deal of contest occasionally between them, and he was sometimes accused of not sufficiently studying or promoting her interest. Miss Farren often disputed points of management with him; and he had great difficulty to keep the steady course which his own judgment had settled. I freely admit that he had done more for Mrs. Jordan, in the way of revival and alteration, than for any other actress, if you even name his sister, Mrs. Siddons.

March the 12th witnessed the first appearance of the "Iron Chest," by Mr. Colman. Sheridan wished Mrs. Jordan to take the part of Helen,

[1] What he said to me upon the occasion will be rightly understood. He used the language of Yorick, when he was no jester. "It may seem ridiculous enough to a torpid heart, — I could have taken her into my arms, and cherished her, though it was in the open street, without blushing." Kemble could repeat the "Sentimental Journey" from beginning to end — he used to recite from Sterne on the stage, when he was a young man.

which seemed little calculated for Miss Farren. I have spoken more than enough already about this drama, and as Mrs. Jordan had nothing to do with it, there is no reason why I should prolong the discussion it occasioned. Sir Edward Mortimer has been a favourite part for Elliston, Young, and Kean. I forget whether Mr. Macready's "election" has seized it also for his. Kean has a physical defect, which looks quite in keeping with the gradual decay of Sir Edward; and an energy, which bursts like lightning from a gloomy sky, and displays the mental agonies of this honourable murderer. I should think he must be the best of them. Kemble did not play it at all.

The "Iron Chest," when opened in public, having presented nothing but the knife of its owner, to convict him of murder, we are next to examine the produce of an old trunk, from which the play of "Vortigern" was extracted, to prove the possessor an impostor. Upon the decided failure of the former play, the property, rather than the manager of Drury, announced the tragedy called "Vortigern" to be in preparation; and on the 2d of April (to avoid the omen of folly), sanctioned by Sheridan, whose irreverence on the occasion I heard, it had a trial, whether written

by Shakespeare or young Ireland. Mrs. Siddons had excused herself from acting the part assigned to her, which devolved in course upon Mrs. Powell. Sheridan had no great opinion of Mrs. Jordan in tragedy, but he well knew the value of her name, and she accepted the character of Flavia. In compliment, therefore, to her, I shall add something to what I have elsewhere written on the subject. The complexion and extent of the fabrication seem to have followed the recent one by Chatterton; and the happy repository they had both chosen gave to each youth the power of imputing to antiquity all that they were skilful enough to compose; with this advantage in favour of Chatterton, that, what he attributed to Rowley could be compared with no acknowledged writings of his; and if the fabricator could but keep to the history, the manners, the diction, and the metre of his presumed original, it would be, perhaps, impossible to detect him completely. As to young Ireland, he exposed himself unnecessarily to a further test, namely, whether a play attributed by him to Shakespeare was good enough to be added to his accredited compositions? When young Ireland acknowledged the whole of the discovered MSS. to be his own, no part of their contents was

superior to even the spontaneous effusions of his pen. The poems of Rowley, though evident fabrications, and produced by Chatterton to the credulous of Bristol, are, in point of genius, so infinitely beyond his acknowledged writings, that there are many able judges of the subject who utterly disbelieve that he was the real author, whether they are Rowley's or not.

There was something in the story of Chatterton peculiarly seducing to a young man of a poetical cast of mind, and, with a very little more Shakespearian lore, he might have defied his critics, and the worst play he could have produced have been thought at least as good as "Titus Andronicus," which Shakespeare's own partners delivered to the world as his. But a single anachronism destroyed him. To show this clearly: in the letter to the poet, from the queen, commanding him to be at Hamptowne with his best players on a certain day, as the Earl of Leicester would be with her, it is at once apparent that our poet was at the head of no company of comedians, when Leicester could be with her Majesty; for he had not written a single play, at any such period. Neither, in fact, was Elizabeth an encourager of the stage. See her letter written at this time to

Secretary Walsingham, which I copied from the original, in the British Museum, Ayscough's Catalogue.

"*The Queen to Secretary Walsingham.*"

"January 25, 1586.

"The daily abuse of stage playes is such an offence to the godlye, and so grete a hindrance to the gospel, as the Papists do exceedingly rejoice at the blemish thereof, and not without cause. For every day in the week the Players' bills are set up in sundry places of the city, some in the name of Her Majesty's men, some th' Erle of Leicester's, some th' Erle of Oxford's, the Lord Admiral's, and divers others — so that when the bells toll to the Lecturers the trumpettes sound to the Stagers. The Play-houses are pestered when the churches are naked. At the one it is not possible to get a place, at the other void seats are plenty. It is a woful sight to see two hundred proude players jet in their silkes, where five hundred poore people starve in the stretes. But if this mischife must be tolerated, let every stage in London pay a weekly pension to the poore, that, *ex hoc malo proveniat aliquod bonum.* But it were rather to

be wished that players might be used as Apollo did laughing, *semel in anno.*"

After reading this, let us only reflect upon the ignorance that could make this royal precisian write to a player, and begin her letter with the familiar "Dear William," of intimacy.

I will do Mrs. Jordan the justice to say that she acted her character of Flavia, *bonâ fide*, with exquisite simplicity, and very properly did not affect to play the critic, which is in fact decided treachery, where you have liberty to reject the part you play. This conduct could not be expected from the male part of the cast, nor was it found about them, — they knew Mr. Kemble's opinion as to the play, and acted quite up to it. Phillimore, in Horsa, would have damned Shakespeare himself. The prologue and epilogue were written by two out and out men, Sir James Bland Burgess and Robert Merry. The former poet commenced thus — read by Whitfield :

> "No common cause your verdict now demands,
> Before the court immortal Shakespeare stands."

Merry was more flowery, of course, and he had Mrs. Jordan to speak his lines :

"Then do not frown, but give due share of praise,
Nor rend from Shakespeare's tomb the sacred bays,
The scatter'd flow'rs he left, benignly save!
Posthumous flow'rs — the garland of the grave!"

She then proceeded to apply his many-coloured characters to the audience, and, though extremely frightened at the dreadful noise in the court, did the poet's pleasant appeal as much justice as their indignation allowed on the occasion.

The manager, now in earnest, acted a tragedy by Miss Lee, called "Almeyda" — it is a Moorish fable sufficiently regular, poetically and even pathetically written; but Kemble and Siddons could not keep the play alive longer than four nights — such is the destructive effect of burlesque, when it precedes even respectable composition. This was on the 20th of April, and on the 30th Hoare's opera of "Mahmoud," in which Kemble strengthened the piece by playing Mahmoud, with Braham, from the Royalty, and a vast musical strength, supported the fame of Storace, as a composer, who had just dropped into the grave.

Mr. Hoare presented Mrs. Siddons with a tragedy, called "Julia," for her benefit, on the 2d of May, and, on the 6th, Mr. Bensley, after

playing Evander, took his leave of the public. There was a refined, gentlemanly scholarship in all he did, and a soldierly deportment, which we have never seen in his station since he quitted it. Mrs. Jordan, on the 9th of June, performed Letitia Hardy and Roxalana, for the benefit of the widow and children of poor Benson, a valuable man, who was accidentally taken from them by a brain fever, — he threw himself from the top of his house in Bridges Street. Benson had the misfortune to act Hengist, in the famous "Vortigern," and, with his yoke-fellow, Horsa, received some of the favours bestowed by the audience upon such stupid invaders; and it was feared that sounds so unusual to his ears had rung in them much longer than in reason they should have done. Benson was an extremely modest, useful man, distinguished for what actors call a quick study, whom a few hours, at a slight warning, enabled to supply the place of any second or third rate absentee in the company.

On the night of his benefit, Mrs. Jordan spoke an address, which the ready muse of Mr. Taylor supplied; it expatiated upon the charitable institutions of the country, and as the house was really crowded to the roof, there was little occasion to

do more than compliment so useful a benevolence; it thus concluded:

> "When every eye the plaintive story tells,
> And every heart with liberal pity swells,
> Let not the officious muse a theme prolong,
> That melts, yet animates this generous throng."

The zeal of Mrs. Jordan, on this occasion, properly rendered her reception enthusiastic through the evening — play, farce, address! What, all herself in this company of splendid talent? — no competition? — yes; Mr. Lewis, of the other house, volunteered his Doricourt, or the play could not have been done.

Mrs. Jordan amused herself this summer with acting at the Richmond Theatre. That of Drury Lane was going to destruction with all the celerity that could be expected. Kemble had resigned, as King had done before him — Miss Farren threatened retirement altogether. Such was the fate of the Grand National Theatre, under the auspices of the most brilliant genius of his time.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Colman and the Reopening of His "Iron Chest" — Season of 1796–97 — The Losses of Drury; Parsons, Dodd — The Latter Excellent in Old Winterton — Contrasted with Fawcett — Wroughton Appointed Stage-manager — Mrs. Jordan and Her Salary — Ballet — Miss Parissot and the "Triumph of Love" — Madame Hilligsberg, an Atalanta in Running — Dowton Recommended by Cumberland — An Admirer Before of Mr. Henderson — Garrick's Prejudice — Deficiencies of the Company — Revivals — Jephson's "Conspiracy" — The Force of Ridicule — Miss Farren Contumacious — New Comedy Postponed — Miss Farren's Return and Triumph — Play Destroyed — The "Shipwreck" — The Operatic "Honeymoon" — "Friend in Need" — New Imogen — Miss Farren's Retirement to a Coronet — Mrs. Pope's Death and Character — The Author Becomes Acquainted with Mrs. Jordan — In the Distress of Drury Lane House, Reynolds Writes for Mrs. Jordan — Cumberland's Behaviour at the Exhibition of the "Will" — Mrs. Jordan's Albina, and Her Seven Ages of Woman — "Dido," and "My Night Gown and Slippers" — Prince Hoare at Covent Garden — Mrs. Jordan a Full Contrast to the Selfish of Her Profession.

THE summer season of 1796 at the Haymarket was devoted by Mr. Colman to the revival of his own fame, which suffered a severe wound at the great theatre, that could only be medicated by a more suc-

cessful treatment at the small one. The Bath theatre on many occasions had the praise of supplying, like its waters, to the salubrity of the metropolis. On the disaster attending his "Iron Chest," Mr. Colman looked around him for the means of ensuring its triumph at the Haymarket, and he heard enough of Elliston, then a young man, as to his energy and powers of voice, to think that he might chance to receive in him the peculiar aid he required.

He tried him first in Octavian, and, in full confidence of his talent, Elliston chose to act Vapour after it, in the farce of "My Grandmother." Every support that could be given to the new performer on this trial was given; it is, however, but justice to acknowledge that he exceeded all late adventurers in promise, and much as he has done in the profession, I confess I think the 25th of June, 1796, augured a great deal more. His countenance was not such an index as Kemble's, and he could not assume the languor of disappointed love. In the picturesque forms of the character he, and all men, were thrown to an immeasurable distance by Kemble, who had a person that far transcended competition.

Mr. Ellison repeated Octavian on the 28th, and

R. W. Elliston

Engraved by Ant. Cardon, from the painting by Bennett

on the 1st of July; and the experiment having completely answered, Mr. Colman turned his attention at once to Sir Edward Mortimer, and gave the docile tragedian the full advantage of the author's instructions. Elliston, to use his own phrase to me, had tried with the great actor "the strength of his youth" in Octavian. In Sir Edward he had nothing to fear; if he raised the character, he had everything to hope, from his manager's gratitude, and the comparison that would be made by the public. At length, on the 29th of August, after rehearsals carefully attended and all tediousness in the dialogue and action pared away, the "Iron Chest" was produced at the Little Theatre, and received with sufficient applause. It was acted thirteen times in the remainder of the short Haymarket season.

Among the summer attractions Cumberland produced a Spanish incident called "Don Pedro," with the cognomen "Il Diabolo," and Palmer might have fancied himself once more at the Royalty; but it did not outlive its third night, and was not above the ordinary sale-work of the stage, without its all-atoning machinery, scenes, and splendid decorations.

The opening of Drury Lane season 1796–97,

under an inefficient direction and a discontented company, had yet other difficulties, the infliction of time. When Garrick quitted the stage Mrs. Clive amused herself with anticipating the failure of his puppets, when the master hand no longer pulled the wires. She ascribed to his instruction all that was good upon his stage, and, left to themselves, she thought the best of them but sorry artists. But the momentum which he had given to his company had been powerful, and in the right direction; and as there was little to oppose them, they kept their individual course correctly, and preserved the harmony of the system on which they depended.

Death, however, was gradually diminishing the group, — Parsons was gone, and Dodd was now to follow him; an event which threw a gloom over the assembled company, and even delayed the opening till the 20th of September. If large theatres were of detriment to fine acting, a fact which I for one do not question, since they have even demanded extravagance in the three articles of action, expression, and utterance, perhaps to no one comedian could they be more fatal than to Dodd. This excellent actor had a weak voice, but as he managed it on the stage of his

great master, it was quite adequate to a cast of *petit-maîtres*, a sort of thin essences, whom a gale too violent, or a noise too obstreperous, would seem to annihilate.

Nor was he confined to the coxcomb, whose wit almost redeemed his effeminacy; he was the paragon representative of all fatuity; from the Town-gull, or Master Stephen, two originals of Ben Jonson's "Every Man in His Humour," with Master Slender, Roderigo, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek by Shakespeare, through all the comic varieties, for they are no more in the genus that Congreve and his successors have struggled to impart to their copies. I say the genus, for it has many species; and the Sir Benjamin Backbite of Sheridan belongs to the Master Matthew of Jonson, however crossed in the breeding.

It was mortifying, I have no doubt, to Dodd to be the point of censure in the dismal "Iron Chest." It is for the author to judge how far he may choose to venture the exhibition of second childhood, which can neither amuse nor be laughed at; but never did I see more perfect acting than the Old Adam Winterton of Dodd. Fawcett, who succeeded him, forced out effect by a shrill, strong tone of voice, and an occasional testiness, but he

was not aged nor smooth in the part. A kindred objection applied to Elliston in Sir Edward, when contrasted with Kemble, — the first only acted his passions, and the latter only his infirmities. Mr. Dodd had none of the restless ambition of our present actors; he remained at Drury, from his first establishment there under Garrick, till the 17th of September, 1796, on which day he died. His great passion was to collect the early editions of our plays, which he began when they could be bought by something below a duke's fortune; and his collection at its dispersion more than tripled its original cost.

Mr. Wroughton was now appointed stage-manager of the theatre, and he was too well acquainted with the concern to deceive himself as to what he undertook. Sheridan promised to write himself again; and it was very apparent, if he did not, that the concern would not much longer be able to hold out. The salaries were not paid up, whatever success had attended the magnificent displays in the management of Kemble. Indeed, so little did Mr. Harris fear the National Theatre, that he only thought of making his own hold as much money as he could draw from the public; and liberal treatment of authors, and absolute mercantile punctu-

ality, made him secure of all offers from writers, who were not so absolutely independent as to consider theatrical profits below their attention.

Mrs. Jordan, I believe, got her money pretty regularly. As to any other attractions in the theatre, they might be said to consume part, if not the greater part, of their receipts, by the lavish decorations with which they were got up. Our inimitable comedian required nothing of the sort. Give her a good comedy and a pleasant farce, a little novelty and fair play, and she could laugh her way through a season. She had a powerful friend, moreover, who would not allow her to be trifled with; a sort of friendship which secured for the noble patron the steady aversion which, in a certain quarter, was always manifested at the very sound of his name. A good deal of this sort of irritation I have myself witnessed at times; and when all policy had by a jury of good fellows been long "found drowned."

Enough has been said to discover the author's opinion of the splendid outrage committed by the new scheme of things upon the spot on which Drury Lane playhouse had once stood; the heads of the concern had been turned in the Haymarket, and turned toward ballet. In consequence, a

lovely stage-figure, Mdlle. Parissot, who seemed to have studied her grace from the floating spirits of the air in picture, was engaged to move through an operatical ballet, and commenced her progress on the 1st of October. It was called the "Triumph of Love."

The time was gone by for objection; and though a few sturdy critics, who had yet heard of Garrick's engagement of Noverre, cried out most piteously as to the anomaly now committed, the fair *émigrante* continued to astonish the public in general, and a little amuse our anatomists, with a command over the joints which had hitherto been supposed attainable only to the early education of the tumbler. The line of her figure, from the finger of the right hand to the toe of the left foot, was a sweep absolutely astonishing; and though now the graceful trick is generally performed in ballet, yet, at the time we are speaking of, dancing was certainly more strictly a science, and either the jumper or the attitudinarian undervalued by the masters of the art. Madame Hilligsberg had been allowed to break through the grand rule of steps for musical notes, and absolutely run away from the accompaniment of the orchestra, and so as she did but run, she had the wit that

Atalanta wanted, and kicked the golden apple triumphantly before her.

" Dum talia secum
Exigit Hippomenes; passu volat alite virgo.
Tamen ille decoram
Miratur magis: et cursus facit ipse decoram."
— *Metam.* x. 586.

" Thus he: — the virgin flies with winged pace,
And seems more beauteous from the breathing race."

Mr. Cumberland was himself an admired dramatic reader, and an excellent judge of acting. But he was not a man to interfere with the management of a theatre, or to give his opinion unsolicited. When Mr. Dowton applied to Wroughton, the manager, he referred that gentleman to Mr. Cumberland, as to a person whom he had the pleasure to know; and this becomes peculiarly essential in the narrative, because it would otherwise seem an ungrateful return of Cumberland to Bannister, who had first established his "Jew," to bring up to town himself another performer of the character, as if dissatisfied with the original Sheva, and only anxious to show himself by a still better light, which he had at length discovered. Whereas the truth was, that Dowton, hearing of Elliston's success in the part, was

anxious to measure his strength with that gentleman, and Mr. Cumberland came up to town with him, merely, as I have said, to accredit, by his friendly countenance, a deserving man and most excellent actor. He performed Sheva on the 11th of October, and remained unrivalled in the "Jew," at least "that Cumberland drew."

This vindication of Mr. Cumberland from an aspersion as to one act of his dramatic life reminds me of another, in which he showed his judgment alike and his sincerity. Garrick had desired him to attend to the performances of Henderson, and report what he thought of him, which he did with great frankness; and, indeed, he seemed to alarm the great actor by the equality he found, mentally at least, in the operations of the two performers. Henderson always considered himself ungenerously obstructed by Garrick, and Mr. Cumberland has left on record his own deliberate opinion, that he thought rightly. "After a languishing negotiation, which got at length into other hands than mine, Garrick made the transfer of his property in the theatre without the name of Henderson upon the roll of his performers. Truth obliges me to say that the negotiation, in all its parts and passages, was not creditable to Mr. Garrick."

To return to Mr. Dowton. In one respect he resembled Parsons, whose place was still to be supplied; he had been liberally educated for the profession of an architect, and was, like him, seduced by private acting. But in acting he was of a very different school, the chastest and therefore the best. He was not disposed, like Munden, to resort to occasional grimace, but made his aim legitimately at character in the drama, and filled up any perfect outline from an author, with all the vitality that could be expected from the consummate artist. Among his other excellences, he is a great master of dialect, and preserves it without the slightest mixture even in the vehemence of passion, when any mode assumed by the tongue is in most danger of being lost in the personal feeling of the actor. As to utility in the theatre, he was nearer to King than Parsons, and sensible speaking made the great charm of his comedy, with a kindly paternal warmth that glowed through the oddities of exterior whim.

It was a melancholy thing to see the supplements sought to the school of Garrick. They could not get even a Foigard in the "Stratagem" without exciting an exclamation of "Think of Moody!" They were at least puzzled for a

Young Norval in "Douglas," a play essential to Mrs. Siddons; and a Charles in the "School for Scandal," because neither the interests of the property nor the literary character of Sheridan could permit the play to sleep. Kemble, manager or not, was always ready for a revival, and in the "Edward and Eleonora" of Thomson, he but waked the dead for a single night, though Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Powell and himself and Palmer did all that their skill could accomplish to excite the unwilling tenants of the tomb. We hardly think the enchanting author of the "Seasons" could thank him for so disturbing his tragedy.

> "Long on these mouldering bones have beat
> The winter's snow, the summer's heat:
> Unwilling, I my lips unclose;
> Leave me, leave me to repose."

On the 15th of November the same performers tried a tragedy, by Jephson, upon the subject of the hackneyed "Clemenza di Tito," by Metastasio, called the "Conspiracy," but it was detected fully in three nights, and humanely banished.

On the 29th of the same month an attempt was made to see if a new comedy, from Holcroft, could do anything for the theatre under political management. It was called the "Force of Ridicule," not

a bad title, though lost upon the concern. The usual time of commencing passed over, and the prologue not appearing to be addressed, the drowsy orchestra, having renewed again and again the usual symphonies of Handel, and Shaw having laid down his fiddle in despair, at length Mr. Palmer, a countenance of alarm and concern assumed for the nonce, told them that "owing to some unforeseen accident Miss Farren had not come to the theatre (the very chronometer of the house!), but that a messenger had been despatched to know the reason of her absence, and the proprietors humbly hoped the audience would indulge them for a few minutes till the messenger returned." About seven o'clock back came Palmer again, *au desespoir*, that Miss Farren was "too ill to leave her room," but that the audience, who had heard nothing for three long hours but the fruit women and the fiddlers, might take either their money at the doors or Mrs. Siddons in Isabella; and, accordingly, some of them did one thing and some the other, while the cause of this confusion was whispered differently. The real fact, however, was that Miss Farren knew her duty too well to dispute about fringe in a new character; she would have used some of her own.

But finding there was but one chance of getting a considerable sum of arrears in her salary, she had seized upon the new comedy as an occasion to give the proprietors notice that "if she did not receive her money she would not leave her house;" and, accordingly, she kept her word better than they did theirs, and the play stood over till the 6th of December.

On that day poor Holcroft and his "Force of Ridicule" went for nothing in the attraction. Miss Farren was to appear! and the mighty public, always satisfied at last with some unmeaning apology, assembled in great force, to show displeasure where it was not due, and wound a lady's delicacy, who had already been robbed of her property. As soon as she was seen upon the stage the storm began to rage, and though the hands might be said to put down the hisses, she thought it best became her to retire; but, determined not to ask indulgence where she acknowledged no offence, she begged Wroughton to go on, and he managed the matter to a nicety, for he besought the audience, in the name of Miss Farren, to pardon the proprietors; and Wroughton loved the truth, and always spoke it, when he had heard it. It is a *rara avis* in apologies.

"If there has been any appearance of disrespect to the public in the disappointment of Tuesday last, I can take upon me, on the part of the proprietors, to express the greatest regret for it; and to add, from myself as manager, as well as for Miss Farren, that, under the present circumstances, I hope you will pardon the error." Up to the clouds (of course theatrical) went at once insulted beauty, and the play was luckily before the audience, on which all the missiles brought with them were impatiently discharged. The play was with difficulty heard throughout, and thus the error of husbands, in not sufficiently regarding their wives, was not, as Mr. Sneer's friend projected, shamed away by the "mere force of ridicule."

The next piece they brought out was musical, and called the "Shipwreck;" however, upon the coast of Drury, such a thing was sincerely welcome, and the owners, Doctor Arnold and his son, were not inhospitably treated by the natives. We confess ourselves in some instances attracted, as one of our poets has it, by the "whistlings of a name," and that of Linley was peculiarly pleasant to our ears; but to Mr. Sheridan it should have still more powerfully appealed. William Linley had composed an opera called the "Honeymoon,"

which literally failed from the weakness of its dialogue. When he brought out the poetical offspring of his relation, he might have been at the trouble to see that it was strong enough to keep its feet. Could he, at all events, be indifferent to the long procession of failures that were convincing the town of his theatre's being devoted to ruin? A very powerful man was at length started against, and might have been the support of his theatre. I allude to Morton, whose "Children in the Wood" could not have been acted so often by his company without attracting his notice. The "Cure for the Heartache" has literally been a fortune to every theatre in these kingdoms; it was brought out by Mr. Harris on the 10th of January, 1797.

Mr. Prince Hoare supplied a "Friend in Need," a musical entertainment of very peculiar interest, on the 9th of February. He was a sure and steady ally to Drury Lane Theatre. And on the 6th of March, a sister of Lady Beechey's, named Worthington, appeared in the character of Imogen. Her terrors, however, were insurmountable. A new ballet, and a revival of the "First of June," on the same evening, looked somewhat reviving, but a stroke, as of death, was at hand: the sudden

announcement of Miss Farren's retirement from the stage and elevation to a coronet.[1] The former event took place on the 8th of April, 1797, after the performance of Lady Teazle.

Instead of the usual rhymes at the end of the play, the whole of the *dramatis personæ* remaining in their stations, Mr. Wroughton advanced and addressed to the audience the following personalities as to Miss Farren, for them to ratify, if they approved them.

"But ah! this night, adieu the mirthful mien,
When Mirth's lov'd favourite quits the mimic scene!
[*Looking toward Miss Farren, who stood supported by King and Miss Miller.*
Startled Thalia would assent refuse,
But Truth and Virtue sued and won the Muse."

I cannot but think this too strongly, however truly put, the lady being herself present. He then spoke her acknowledgments, which she declined doing for herself, and then the countess-elect advanced, and curtseyed to the right, the left,

[1] A slight suspicion may here arise, whether the determined conduct at the "Force of Ridicule" was not an anticipation of this event, and that it would be better to obtain all arrears from the theatre, as Miss Farren, than leave them for subsequent adjustment between a noble earl and Mr. Sheridan the politician.

and the front, as is usual upon occasions of high stage ceremonial. The late countess died on the 14th of March, having just completed her forty-fourth year; and, as respect was not pretended where it was not felt, the second marriage took place on the 1st of May following, and the stage lost its only woman of fashion. I say its only woman of fashion, because the disposer even of coronets, the "insatiate archer" himself, had espoused the other just, but more solid representative of stylish females, Mrs. Pope, on the 15th of March, in the fifty-second year of her age. I shall consider her as a daughter of Garrick's theatre, because there she acquired all the resources of her art; and they constituted her the most general actress that the stage had ever seen. I can, with perfect truth, say, that in tragedy, as well as comedy, there were characters of which she was the most perfect representative. Had she possessed such a face as that of Mrs. Siddons, there might have been more; but then, some of her sprightly comedy would have been awed down, and she might on the whole have been less distinguished. In the days of Yates and Barry, she established herself by unwearied diligence; and though always weak in point of chest, endured a

continuance of exertion that was certainly too much for her strength. She was the universal favourite of her profession, and in private life affectionately honoured by all who were worthy of her society. Her manners were singularly fascinating, as a happy compound of elegance, cordiality, and fine temper. In my first play I had the happiness of her powerful aid, and it led naturally to a friendly intercourse, which I valued as I ought — for I still regret her loss.

Mrs. Jordan, about this time, without ceremony introduced herself to me, and as she wished my opinion upon some professional points, as these occurred she referred to me by letter, and I gave them the best consideration in my power. I visited her, and saw her young family about her. It was natural she should speak of the few opportunities afforded by the present management for distinguishing herself, and the retirement of Miss Farren led her to think of extending her range of characters. She differed radically with that lady as to Lady Teazle, and if it be a consistent character, she was probably right; but the only finely drawn and masterly personage in the comedy is Joseph Surface, and it was acted by the late John Palmer so as to throw every other part into the

shade. I can safely add that his smooth hypocrite is still unapproached, and will probably remain so.

Wroughton, as an old Covent Garden actor, was personally acquainted with both Morton and Reynolds, and the latter gentleman found it convenient to tender through him a comedy to Drury Lane Theatre. He was too good a judge of the effective to pass over Mrs. Jordan, and she willingly accepted the part designed for her. The author himself has given a whimsical account of the effect of his intrusion upon the sacred boards of Drury Lane Theatre; and he is borne out by the contempt which the concern at all times affected for the writers, and more sometimes than the writers of the rival house. Yet surely, if they reflected at all, there was nothing very despicable in a writer who could attract crowded houses for thirty nights together; nor was the great national theatre so exclusively devoted to the legitimate drama, as not to have admitted from time to time much indifferent composition, and unfortunately, too, as irregular as it was dull.

On the 19th of April, the great experiment was made by the performance of the comedy of the "Will." Cumberland had planted himself in the orchestra to watch the effect, and really anticipat-

ing a triumph which he never enjoyed. At the first displeasure expressed by the audience, he left his seat, hurried around to the greenroom, begged Wroughton to introduce him to the author, and at once impertinently addressed him thus: "Let this, young gentleman, be a lesson to you." Wroughton felt becoming indignation at the veteran's use of the introduction he had given him. Cumberland hurried back to his station, and soon had reason to think the author not quite so young in the profession as he had supposed him.

The "Will," like many of Cumberland's own comedies, was a novel dramatised. I do not mean a novel, existing as such, turned into a play, but the same kind of incidents, and in equal plenty, as might have informed with bustle the usual three volumes allotted by the great writers of the day to their romances of real life. Accordingly, it would take three full pages to give even an outline of the plot. As Sheridan's screen-scene, in the "School for Scandal," had been conceived from the work in which he found his Charles and Joseph, so Reynolds had imagined he might use the discovery of the philosopher Square in the garret of Molly Segrim, and accordingly concealed Sir Solomon Cynic in a recess among some straw,

and a curtain is drawn before him, which Dolly Rustic tries to secure by running his cane sword into it to keep it close. The weapon is snatched out by Howard to chastise Albina in the disguise of a young midshipman, and the Cynic is discovered with very laughable effect. There is more humour still, for we have a haunted room and the terrors of an old maid, and Albina (Mrs. Jordan) engaged with everybody, and animating the whole, as much by her generosity and justice as her eccentric humour and invention.

Nothing could be less equivocal than the success of the piece, and Mrs. Jordan had at length got a new character, which was likely to keep the treasury of the theatre open to the performers for some time to come. It was after this comedy that Mrs. Jordan spoke the "Seven Ages" of "Memory" Rogers; to which Andrews, I think it was, added some risible novelties for effect. It was now evidently in the right mouth, and was a great favourite accordingly.

The 28th of April was the first interruption given to the "Will" in its run, being the benefit night of John Palmer. He revived a tragedy, written by Read, the rope-maker, called the "Queen of Carthage." It had been acted in 1767

also for a benefit, and was then performed by Powell, Holland, Bensley, and Mrs. Yates. To which, *longo intervallo*, were now opposed Barrymore, Palmer, Caulfield, and Mrs. Siddons. Again the house did not adopt the play, though applauded. I wish the publication had not been suppressed, that I might have contrasted the manners of the two Didos. How Read may have written the play I can barely surmise; but supposing it tolerable, I should fancy Yates was nearer the classical, or rather French standard. Palmer could only be an Enéas in carnival time. After the play, Palmer, who was fond of recitation, indulged the audience with a repetition of Mr. Colman's "Nightgown and Slippers;" but the decorum of a public assembly was insulted by their ludicrous descriptions, and the actor received a sensible rebuke with suitable acquiescence.

Few authors have been of more essential service to the theatre than Mr. Prince Hoare. His farces have stood the test of time, and are likely to last as long as we either act or sing. Upon Reynolds's reception at Drury Lane the beginning of the year, he at once crossed over to Covent Garden with a comic opera, called the "Italian Villagers." The critics said it had some resem-

blance to "As You Like It." If it had, it is the only piece that ever had it; for of all the efforts of the mighty author, that is perhaps the most delightful, exhibiting rural manners that are neither affected nor clownish, neither Arcadian nor Spencerian, with lessons intermixed, by which the wisest may be improved, and the most saturnine diverted. As to the fable of my friend Hoare, I will not mar a curious tale by telling it, nor say more of his opera than that Quick, Munden, and Knight had very entertaining characters, and played them well for the six scattered nights allotted to the piece.

The "Tattlers," a comedy, by the late Doctor Benjamin Hoadly, was acted for a single night here on the 29th of April, and the character of Fanny Alworthy was performed by Miss Mansel, the future Mrs. Reynolds. But the essence of the subject had been long extracted, and the audience grew weary of what might have delighted them about the time when it was written by the doctor.

The next interruption given to the "Will" was by the benefit of Mrs. Siddons, on the 1st of May, intended to be the wedding-day of Miss Farren, and the entertainments of the bill were selected

with reference to that event. Mrs. Piozzi, it was whispered, had written an address for Mrs. Siddons, to wind up the whole, and compliment the noble pair by some apposite allusions to the titles of the pieces selected. "To anticipate ill, it was said, were but a 'Fatal Curiosity.'" This was the play. "Each kindest wish waits on her 'Wedding-day.'" This was the farce. There was a third piece, which completed the nuptial allusions, thus alluded to: "If 'tis not happy, why, 'The Deuce Is in 'Em.'"

But all this ingenuity excited a laugh in the wrong place, for, as our readers remember, the subject of Mrs. Inchbald's "Wedding-day" was an old man of rank marrying a young woman, and the return of his first wife, before the day was over; and Colman's "Deuce Is in Him" is the ridicule of platonic love. There could be no doubt that the two ladies had nothing but serious compliment in their thoughts; but if the waggery of Sheridan had designed to remind the lady of the "Force of Ridicule," which she had deserted so lately, he could not have found materials more exactly suited to his purpose.

As to Mrs. Jordan, she laughed her way through Lady Contest with infinite glee: her only comic

rival had been promoted out of her way, and left her, in every comedy, the positive choice of the character she should play, and, accordingly, she considerably extended her range by occasional adoptions of the woman of fashion; but nature had fixed her to unbounded hilarity and deep sensibility, and the goddess seemed to desert her when she assumed such characters as were produced by fashion rather than herself.

Mr. Cumberland's extraordinary behaviour to Reynolds was soon accounted for; he had a new comedy himself in preparation, called the "Last of the Family." Mrs. Jordan was the heroine, who is the daughter of a man fond of his name, and determined to impose it on his son-in-law. This naturally fixes her affections upon a nameless youth employed to write the family history. Her love for the unknown youth speedily dismisses him from his task, and his mistress feigns distraction to get him back again. He turns out to be her first cousin, the son of her father's brother, and consequently has no name to adopt. It lasted six nights.

Mrs. Jordan closed the Covent Garden season by acting Peggy and Nell, most kindly, for the benefit of Mr. Haymes, and repeated the "Country

Girl," for the widows and orphans of February 14th, the day of Lord St. Vincent's glorious victory. She addressed now every creature that needed help, in the language of Horatio to the ghost of Hamlet's father.

> "If there be any good thing to be done,
> That may to thee do ease, and grace to me, —
> Speak to me."

In short, she was a full and perfect contrast to those whose service was always to be paid, though exerted even for a relation.

CHAPTER XIV.

Death of Charles Macklin — His Works Collected by Murphy — Mrs. Jordan's Kind Subscription — "The Jew That Shakespeare Drew" — Interpreted by Sir Joseph Mawbey — Dryden's "Œdipus" — Lines in, Applied to Macklin — Their Beauty — Lord Mansfield's Regard for Macklin — Note — His Lordship's Opinion on the French Revolution — The "Heir at Law" — "Filthy Dowlas" — "Italian Monk," at the Summer Theatre — Mrs. Jordan visits Richmond and Margate — Sees Mrs. Abington in Beatrice — Her Excellence in the Character — Miss Betterton, Since Mrs. Glover — The Chasm at Drury — How Miss Farren Was to Be Replaced — Miss Humphreys in Lady Emily — Miss Biggs in the "Irish Widow" — Miss Decamp a Lover in the "Chimney Corner" — Mrs. Jordan in Sir Edward Bloomley — Defects of "Cheap Living" — Jordan Rather Restive — Again Quite the Duchess — Her Happy Illustration of That Title — Mrs. Crawford's Idle Return — Lord Duncan's Victory — Mrs. Jordan Acts for the Sufferers — Something Fine — Kemble Acts Hotspur — John Palmer's Death in the Summer — Effects of It in the Theatre.

ON the 11th of July, 1797, died the long-celebrated Charles Macklin, and it may be said the stage lost its father in more senses than that of senility. He attained the great age of ninety-seven years, and was honoured

equally for his talents and his virtues. It was late in his life when I first saw him act, but I am bound to say that, in what he did, he was a model, not only of manly force, but critical acuteness. He lived at a time when Johnson had made it a fashion for the old to be dogmatical, and Macklin availed himself fully of his privilege. The decline of life had been rendered comfortable by the subscription to his works edited by Arthur Murphy. Mrs. Jordan sent him ten pounds on this occasion. He died, where he had long lived, in Tavistock Row, Covent Garden — he had a metropolitan constitution, and loved London sincerely; the verge of the old convent used to be an actor's sanctuary.

We have all heard of the distich, called an impromptu, of the poet Pope's:

> "This is the Jew
> That Shakespeare drew."

But few of us, I believe, ever conceived their meaning to be doubtful. It was a "nice discernment between good and ill," as B. Jonson speaks, that led Sir Joseph Mawbey to think what he expresses so ingenuously in a letter before me: "In applying the couplet, I was led to suppose,

improperly, that his own mind and not the assumed character described the man." When he gets right, even, the baronet's expression does not become much clearer. Why, then, the assumed character did describe the man, and that (Shylock's) was a bad one. Which he now would not say.

The application of Dryden's lines in "Œdipus" to Charles Macklin is so just and elegant, that the reader may be glad to read them once more, even if they live in his memory. The intense school of poetry, believe me, has not surpassed them.

> "Of no distemper, of no blast he died,
> But fell like autumn-fruit that mellow'd long,
> Ev'n wonder'd at, because he dropped no sooner.
> Fate seem'd to wind him up for fourscore years,
> Yet freely ran he on ten winters more;
> Till, like a clock worn out with eating time,
> The wheels of weary life, at last, stood still."

The student in expressive harmony will find the last line, in particular, possessed of imitative exactness even astonishing. The slight suspensive pause before and after the words "at last," will render the closing foot of the verse immovable.

All the passages of Macklin's life had a degree of mystery about them which rarely attends a man so honourable as he undoubtedly was. As a

number of his mystifications happened when he certainly had no failure of memory, he must have amused himself with the silly curiosity around him, and invented circumstances for the occasion. He was in his thirty-fourth year before he appeared upon the London stage; acted his twenty years, and retired from it, as far back as the year 1753. He then seems to have recovered the strength he had lost, and the powers of his mind enabled him to give perfection to his masterwork, called the "Man of the World." Its dialogue is distinguished by an almost political point and force, and the character of Sir Archy MacSarcasm received from the performance of its author a perfection which has not attended any other dramatic representation in my remembrance. Compared with Macklin, Cooke was noisy and vulgar — he could not bow; he had no "insidious humility" to make a show with, — it was effective, but that was all. Macklin was "the true and perfect image of life indeed."

His wife and daughter were ornaments of the stage also, and Garrick was often indebted to the volunteer kindness of Miss Macklin for a heroine, when his own ladies chose to be too ill to appear on a weak night. I am little disposed certainly to

compliment the present at the expense of the past, but I am compelled to say that, however inferior in some points to their great predecessors, the actresses of the modern stage at least do their duty steadily to the managers and the public. He is buried in the same vault with an only son in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and was attended to his grave by Mr. Hull and Mr. Munden, the treasurer, and other officers of the theatre, and a few private friends.

It is hardly extraneous to the subject of the theatre to notice that the great Lord Mansfield preceded Macklin by a few months, and expired at the venerable age of eighty-nine years. When Macklin had brought his enemies to his feet, and refused the damages which the jury had awarded to him, that illustrious man said to him, "Mr. Macklin, you never acted better in your life." It was a compliment to make a man proud.[1]

The summer of 1797 was distinguished by,

[1] I beg the reader's indulgence, while I return to Lord Mansfield for a few moments. We live in a period that may be called exclusively the commercial, or the moneyed age; the dependence, that cherished all the virtues by binding men to each other, is at an end; every man now thinks and acts, as Coriolanus says:

> "As if a man were author of himself,
> And knew no other kin."

perhaps, the best comedy of the younger Colman, the "Heir at Law," a play entirely suggested by a short colloquy between Sir John Falstaff and Mrs. Quickly, the substitution of "Dowlas! filthy dowlas! for Holland of eight shillings an ell;" Daniel Dowlas, the chandler, for the real Lord Duberly. The Dowlasses, and their household refiner, Doctor Pangloss, excited, and will always

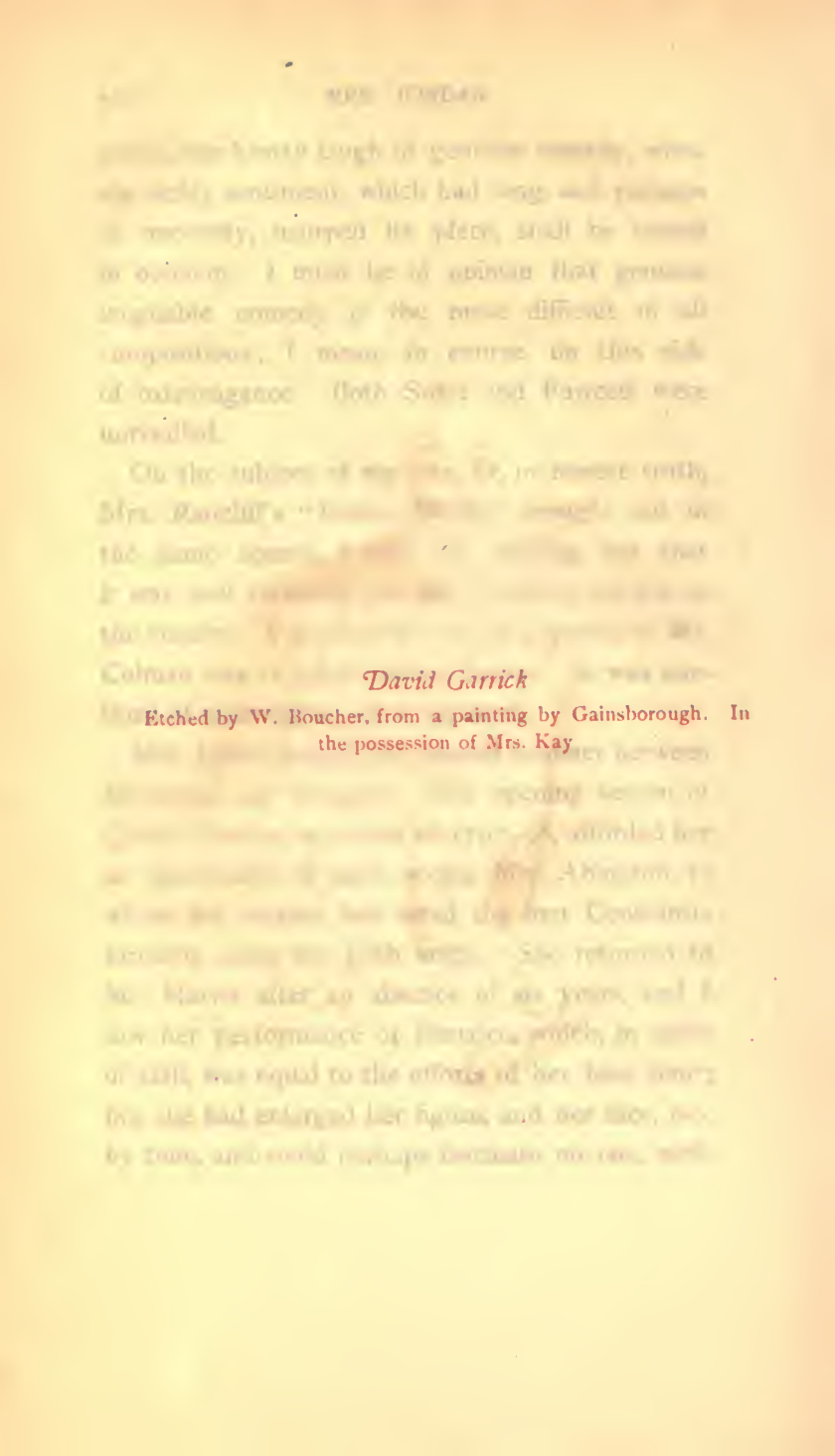
At such a time, when revolutions are again menacing the repose of the world, the opinion of Lord Mansfield, given to his friend Doctor Turton, on the French nation about 1792, merits the deliberate attention of those who think.

"MY DEAR TURTON: — How can any two reasonable men think differently on the subject? A nation which, for more than twelve centuries, has made a conspicuous figure in the annals of Europe; a nation where the polite arts first flourished in the northern hemisphere, and found an asylum against the barbarous incursions of the Goths and Vandals; a nation whose philosophers and men of science cherished and improved civilisation, and grafted on the feudal system, the best of all systems, their laws respecting the descents and various modifications of territorial property! To think that a nation like this should not, in the course of so many centuries, have learned something worth preserving, should not, in the course of so many centuries, have hit upon some little code of laws, or a few principles sufficient to form one! Idiots! who, instead of retaining what was valuable, sound, and energetic in their constitution, have at once sunk into barbarity, lost sight of first principles, and brought forward a farrago of laws fit for Botany Bay! It is enough to fill the mind with astonishment and abhorrence! A constitution like this may survive that of an old man, but nothing less than a miracle can protect and transmit it down to posterity."

excite, the hearty laugh of genuine comedy, when the sickly sentiment, which had long, and perhaps of necessity, usurped its place, shall be buried in oblivion. I must be of opinion that genuine laughable comedy is the most difficult of all compositions; I mean, in course, on this side of extravagance. Both Suett and Fawcett were unrivalled.

On the subject of my own, or, in honest truth, Mrs. Radcliff's "Italian Monk," brought out in the same season, I shall say nothing, but that it was well received, and did, I believe, service to the theatre. I am sure the liberal payment of Mr. Colman was of great service to me. It was one-third of nine nights, after expenses.

Mrs. Jordan passed the present summer between Richmond and Margate. The opening season of Covent Garden, or winter of 1797–98, afforded her an opportunity of again seeing Mrs. Abington, to whom her mother had acted the first Constantia formerly upon the Irish stage. She returned to Mr. Harris after an absence of six years, and I saw her performance of Beatrice, which, in point of skill, was equal to the efforts of her best time; but she had enlarged her figure, and her face, too, by time, and could perhaps fascinate no one, with-



David Garrick

Etched by W. Boucher, from a painting by Gainsborough. In the possession of Mrs. Kay

out the aid of recollection on his part. She was no longer the "glass of fashion" that she had once been; the modern costume *à la Grecque* did not suit her; she was now a matronly Beatrice; but, while alive, the character clung to her closely, and, in the year 1815, sunk into the grave along with her, I will not say never to return, though that is extremely probable, unless, indeed, it should be decorated with the harmonies of some future Bishop, and "Much Ado about Nothing," convert this comedy, like many others, into an opera, to save a sinking theatre. Which the spirit of good taste (if such a spirit there be), in mercy to the fame of Shakespeare avert!

Previous to her appearance, which was on the 6th of October, Murray spoke an address written by Mr. Colman, which referred to the school of Garrick, and the nature to which it professed to adhere, but sure, as it happened in the case of Shakespeare himself, so well remembered by B. Jonson, —

> "Thy art,
> My gentle Garrick, must sustain a part."

This art, it is true, always tended to make the imitation of nature more perfect, by the filling up of numberless chasms, which mere language

must always leave to the actor, in the most finished character ever drawn by a dramatic poet.

The coincidences of life are many, and often singular. At the very time that Mrs. Abington was evincing to us what her powers had been, by what they still were, Mr. Harris displayed, in the person of Miss Betterton, from the Bath theatre, the only actress who ever, in the slightest degree, resembled her. Then, however, she was considered as a tragedian, which naturally she was not, and acted Elwina in the "Percy" of Miss More. She was an early proficient in the studies of her profession, and possessed a sound and critical understanding. This young lady is now Mrs. Glover, the ablest actress in existence. But we have the misfortune to live in a girlish age, and womanhood is a disqualification. Things in their nonage, like the boys that, "aiery of children," that so annoyed Shakespeare, and then berattled the common stage, now possess it merely. A true genius, however, is welcome at whatever age, but then, as a glorious exception, let the due honours unaccompanied invest her only.

At Drury Lane Theatre, they were looking to supply a fearful chasm indeed: that left by Miss

Farren in the "Heiress." As far as figure went, Miss Humphreys, whom I always looked upon as a Jewess, might represent Lady Emily Gayville, or any other lady of fashionable exterior; but the broken irregularity, always visible in the features of the fairest daughter of Israel, destroyed her beauty while she was speaking — she was only a fine woman while acting the silent one.

Miss Biggs, from the Bath stage, succeeded her on the 17th of October, and on the whole possessed most requisites for the situation. Miss Farren did not wear the male habit — Miss Biggs wore it with ease to herself, and yet without effrontery. She acted the Irish Widow with great spirit, and received the highest encouragement. For the most part, I like the assumption of the male attire better than the adoption of the sex. Miss Decamp had become a lover in a farce by Walsh Porter, called the "Chimney Corner," and Mrs. Jordan was next to be received as a young and dissipated baronet, called Sir Edward Bloomley, in the comedy called "Cheap Living," by which Reynolds, now a denizen of Drury, followed his "Will" on the 21st of October.

As the fable of the "Will" was a volume itself, so "Cheap Living" had no story to tell. Charles

Woodland, having rescued Miss Bloomley from robbers, has the passport of gratitude to her affections, and robs her of her honour. Neither of the lovers, however, are happy without the tardy reparation of religion. Sir Edward Bloomley preserves Charles Woodland from being disinherited, and a man, called Sponge, eats and drinks his way through the piece, and by this cheap living gives a title to the play, in which he has nothing else to do. So that the efficient characters in the piece are neither of them principals, and are there only to display the meanness of the one, and the cunning, vicious prematurity of the other. It was merely a pair of lovers, to supply a decided attachment of two of the performers, — a frolic for Mrs. Jordan and a bustle for Bannister, — with two hypocrites to the tune of Palmer and Miss Pope, with a slight network only to keep the odd fish together. All immoral, dishonest persons.

If Cumberland had walked up now to him out of the orchestra, the indignant "mender of hearts" had been justified. The truth was, it was a very hasty "Margate excursion" of the author, and wanted much of his usual adroitness. Mrs. Jordan did not like her character, and seemed dis-

posed at one time to decline it altogether. Wroughton's friendship for the author or anxiety for the theatre made him notice her discontent at rehearsal with some sharpness. "Why, you are grand, madam — quite the duchess again this morning." "Very likely," replied Mrs. Jordan, "for you are not the first person this very day who has condescended to honour me ironically with the title." Then, without the slightest pique (says Reynolds himself), and with all her characteristic humour, she told us that, having that morning discharged her Irish cook for impertinence, when she paid her the wages due to her the indignant daughter of St. Patrick showed her a shilling, and, banging it down upon the table, exclaimed:

"Arrah now, honey, with this thirteener won't I sit in the gallery? and won't your Royal Grace give me a curtsey? and won't I give your Royal Highness a howl, and a hiss into the bargain?"

The word condescended, used by Mrs. Jordan, while it levelled the manager with her cook, amply corrected his very unpolite behaviour, and introduced her story in the true way. It may be observed here that the lower class of the Irish have

more humour in their anger than those of any other nation under the sun.

How few, in the profession of the stage, know the true period for retiring from it, or, if they do, find it convenient to retire. This reflection is extorted from me by the return of Mrs. Crawford in the character of Lady Randolph, with Harry Johnston for her Norval, on the 23d of the month, at Covent Garden Theatre. It was an appearance for the benefit alone of Mrs. Siddons, and left her the palm, which the memory of some, and the inclination of more, up to that moment denied her.

The sufferers in Lord Duncan's glorious action on the coast of Holland left their relatives to the benevolence of their countrymen, and the theatres became receivers of their bounty in the disguise of their pleasure. Mrs. Jordan acted for them, thus adding the deed to the will, followed by the prize. Cumberland contributed an address, which was spoken by Wroughton, not, perhaps, quite equal to that of Richardson for Howe; indeed, one couplet seemed completely Della Cruscan, or the muse of Rob. Merry:

> "In the mid-watch, night's melancholy noon,
> Humming their ditty to the pale-fac'd moon."

But on such occasions something fine is always expected, and we must attend to the warning only of Lady Macbeth :

" Think of this, good peers, but as a trick of custom."

Kemble had been kept from acting Hotspur in London by the want of a Falstaff. A Mr. Longley, on the 25th of November, afforded him an opportunity of showing us the hero of the North, but the candidate for the honours of Falstaff could not decline "the word honour" on his examination, and was put aside. Drury Lane offered a Mr. Archer, moreover, in the character of Shylock, with about equal miscarriage. Such trifling in the national theatre was monstrous. If the reader will allow me to cast the "First Part of Henry IV." from the two companies, he will see how a play should be acted : The King, Bensley ; the Prince, Lewis ; Hotspur, Kemble ; Glendower, Digges ; Poins, C. Kemble ; Bardolph, Moody ; Falstaff, Henderson ; and Mistress Quickly, Mrs. Davenport — and I hope, as Peter Quince says, here is a play fitted ! But at one time, you cuckoo ? No, not any one time, I entirely believe.

Matthew George Lewis, the son of the deputy

secretary at war, has been familiarly, perhaps complimentarily, called Monk Lewis, from a romance written by him, of which the genius and the indecorum are about equal. He was a scholar, fashionable in his connections, fond of the theatre, and more than a melodramatic writer, though wedded to such stage effects and skilful in producing them. He brought out, on the 14th of December, a dramatic romance called the "Castle Spectre," a piece really of one scene, but that so astonishingly beautiful, that it drew crowds to the theatre, and very nearly restored the house of Sheridan. The secret of this spectre was extremely well kept; the bill of the day gave not a glimpse of light beyond the mere title, and the actors in the piece answered to all kind inquirers as to who the spectre was, or by whom represented, "You'll see." The set scene in this theatre had an oratory with a perforated door of pure Gothic, over which was a window of rich tracery, and Mrs. Jordan, who played Angela, being on the stage, a brilliant illumination suddenly took place, and the doors of the oratory opened: the light was perfectly celestial, and a majestic and lovely, but melancholy image stood before us; at this moment, in a low but sweet and thrilling harmony,

the band played the strain of Jomelli's chaconne, in his celebrated overture, in three flats. Every hearer exclaimed:

> "This is no mortal business, nor no sound
> That the earth owns."

And the figure began slowly to advance; it was the spirit of Angela's mother, Mrs. Powell, in all her beauty, with long sweeping envelopments of muslin attached to the wrist, and picture assuredly has never approached the effect, though it may have suggested it. Mrs. Jordan cowered down motionless, with terror, and Mrs. Powell bent over her prostrate daughter in maternal benediction. In a few minutes she entered the oratory again, the doors closed, and darkness once more enveloped the heroine and the scene.

As to the strain from Jomelli, its quality may be gathered from one circumstance. My friend Atwood, who, as a composer, needs no praise of mine, converted it to the choir service; and I myself heard him play it as the response in the litany to the deep murmur of the organ in St. Paul's Cathedral, and also in the king's chapel at Windsor, and I am sure his master, Mozart, would have applauded his taste.

I borrow from myself what I have before written as to my friend Kemble in the present play: "There was one remarkable point of character in Mr. Kemble; that, out of the management, and where responsibility was upon others, he was the gentlest of all great actors — he would do anything." So that when he was cast into Percy, in the present piece, a sort of Harlequin hero, who gets into his enemy's castle after his Columbine, Angela, he had to climb from a sofa to a Gothic window, and, being alarmed by the stirring of his black guards, he has to fall from the height flat again at his length upon the said sofa, and seem asleep, as they had before seen him. This he did as boldly and suddenly as if he had been shot. When people complimented him upon his unsuspected agility, "Nay," he used to say, "gentlemen, Mr. Boaden has exceeded all compliment upon this feat of mine, for he counselled me from 'Macbeth,' to

"'Jump the life to come.'"

But it was melancholy to see the abuse of such talents. It is only in a barn that the Cato of a company should be allowed to risk his neck.

The term black guards, used above, alludes to the African servants in the play.

As a disgusting flippancy was now become the established characteristic of a preface, the author thus vindicates the colour he has given to these guards of Percy: "I thought it would give a pleasing variety to the characters if I made my servants black; and could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her." Thus happily remembering one of the associations of language used to describe a bruise, black and blue. This principle of thinking only of effect seems to have coloured his dialogue also; for, before the fifteenth century, we have the following anachronisms: "a sheet of foolscap," "kissing and smuggling," "an overgrown turtle," "I heard the guitar," "plain cherry-brandy," "Saib advances a sofa." His dresses also were fashioned for effect alone, and the fool of the play was red on one side and white on the other — with a "cocked hat," a "ruffled shirt," "short breeches," and "silk stockings." The reader sees what a narrow escape Mrs. Jordan had from a "blue skin;" of which the effect would have been far from celestial, which was not the case as to her dress, which was the picturesque angelic. Enough of the antiquary.

The "Castle Spectre" was acted forty-six times

between the 14th of December, 1797, and the close of the season, in June. Lewis, aware of his services, in a dispute with Sheridan once offered to bet him all the money his play had brought into the treasury. "No," replied the wit, "I can't afford to do that, but I'll bet you all it is worth." Wit is seldom so just a measure of obligation as arithmetic. Sheridan should never have attacked Lewis in Westminster Hall for merely endeavouring to obtain the money due to him. Nor should Colman have fallen foul of the ponderous machinery, processions, and castles, and elephants of the great theatre, if he himself ever intended to employ, and even extend, the costly pageantry. This, however, he did on the 16th of January, 1798, by the production of the well-known grand spectacle called "Bluebeard," which Mrs. Jordan stayed to see after acting the Country Girl. Everything worked ill. The grand cavalcade in the mountains, seen for half an hour to the same march (a very fine one), with the small elephants, needing the Gulliver-like aid of the scene-shifter, to get them through the defiles, and the horrible boggling at the destruction of Abomelique, merited almost a second preface from the author of the "Iron Chest." But, upon the whole, it was per-

formed so well, and was so truly splendid, that it has never been surpassed in my remembrance. If I were to select the most prominent merit it had, I should clearly name the sister of the heroine, Irene, by Miss Decamp, who looked, and acted, and sang, in such a way as to prove herself the first melodramatic actress that had been seen among us. It ran on just like the "Castle Spectre," and must have produced immense receipts, attended, it is true, with no slight expense of dresses, decorations, and supernumeraries.

Mrs. Jordan now really played every night, for when the "Castle Spectre" was not performed, the "Country Girl" or the "Confederacy" called her out, or she supported the "Will," which outlived "Cheap Living" by many a season. However, a little relief was promised, and given, by the production of Kotzebue's "Stranger" on the 24th of March, 1798, and Sheridan himself had been induced by his new ally, Mr. Grubb, to read and improve the translated play as Mr. Thompson delivered it. He wrote the song which Mrs. Bland sang in the Stranger's hearing, and which echoed the exact feelings of his own wife, to a tune which was familiar to his ear. I have done with the controversy about this play; for what sig-

nifies the reasoning where every heart is touched, and every eye is suffused with tears? Reynolds has ludicrously quarrelled with Mrs. Haller for giving away the old six-and-twenty hock. She conceived no wine too good for the weak and miserable. Oh, these writers of comedy! I wonder the following stage direction escaped him: "The baron stands opposite to Mrs. Haller, and from time to time casts a glance at her, in which his heart is swimming."

Kemble told me that in the "Stranger" he should throw his Penruddock into the shade, and I hardly believed that possible; but Kotzebue had a power infinitely beyond Cumberland, and the sudden meeting of the Stranger and Mrs. Haller, the conclusion of the fourth act, and the last scene of the play are among the most exquisite things of any stage. I am not a German critic, and cannot tell whether his style be equal to that of Schiller, but I suspect it is not. Yet the plays of Schiller have little pathos, though they have a wild, irregular greatness, that claims a relation to Shakespeare. Let me say that Mr. Kemble here showed himself in the highest power of his art, and if possible, extended his reputation. Mrs. Siddons had not equal metal to work, but she fashioned it

with great skill, and excited the sobs of her fair hearers in abundance.

On the 19th of May, O'Keefe tried the effect at Drury Lane of a comedy he had written for Mrs. Jordan. It was called "She's Eloped," a very bad title, containing an equivocal contraction and an injudicious discovery. Poor man! he was then for the only time led into the greenroom by Mrs. Powell, and decided against the prologue to his play, in which Cumberland, I think it was, talked of Homer and his poverty and his blindness, and the proud pang of a wounded spirit came over him. Mrs. Jordan, however, could not preserve the comedy, though she acted Arabel, and spoke an epilogue written by M. G. Lewis. O'Keefe has these allusions to his play and Mrs. Jordan:

"For she's eloped, her gentle heart much griev'd:
That jilt, call'd Fortune, ceas'd to use me well.
My comic efforts were but ill receiv'd;
With Dora tho' she came, frowns greet my Arabel."

The night preceding Smith came to town to act Charles, in the "School for Scandal," for his old friend King's benefit. He now, as to Mrs. Jordan, saw his *prophétie accomplie.* She was at the summit of the profession, and to the theatre, which he loved, invaluable. His discernment in this

case may atone for his absurd puffing of the young Roscius; but Smith did not love John Kemble.

The summer of 1798 was rendered remarkable in the history of the stage by the death of that great comedian, my friend, John Palmer. This happened to him while acting the character of the Stranger, and he was struck down in that agonising scene in the fourth act between himself and Whitfield, who performed Baron Steinfort, when about to answer his inquiry after the former's children. The words he tried in vain to articulate were these:

"*Stra.* I left them at a small town hard by."

But this was so little calculated for effect, that, still keeping to the baron as the person replied to, Palmer was reported to have said to him: "O God, God! there is another, and a better world." But the saints who spread this precious falsehood were not quite wide of their aim; for they thus appear in the second act (not the fourth), and are not spoken to Steinfort even there, but to the Stranger's servant, Francis:

"*Stra.* Have you forgotten what the old man said this morning?

'There is another and a better world!'"

So that poor Palmer's dramatic life was two acts longer, at least, than these gloomy owls screamed it to have been. The play itself was printed at Liverpool upon Palmer's death, and the chief purchasers were the serious persons of the evangelic persuasion, who more than insinuated that the calamity befallen the theatre was a judgment on profaneness, and used the play itself as a text to sentence the players to perdition.

The truth is that Palmer had recently lost his wife and a favourite child, and the man's distress, meeting with matter so congenial in his profession, excited a convulsive spasm that ended him in a moment. Messrs. Hamerton, Callan, and Mara were the persons who conveyed the lifeless body from the stage into the greenroom, and every effort of medical skill was employed for the space of an hour in vain. The announcement then made by the faculty excited the heavy sighs of the men and the piercing shrieks of the women. The impression was so terrific behind the curtain that when Mr. Aickin, the manager, came forward to announce the result to the audience, his remarkably manly nerve was so completely overpowered by his horror that he withdrew, unable to articulate a single syllable; and they had to learn Mr.

Palmer's fate from Incledon, scarcely less agitated than Mr. Aickin.

Mr. Garrick had slighted Palmer in his outset, and said that he never would make an actor; however, this judgment he lived to reverse. I can readily believe that Palmer, as a stripling, might have promised nothing but a showy figure at his maturity. He was an actor made by time and practice, not a genius like Henderson, who must at once be Hamlet, and Benedick, and Richard, and Falstaff, or nothing.

I do not think Mrs. Jordan acted anywhere this summer but at Richmond; for which there appeared, indeed, to be sufficient family reasons.

END OF VOLUME I.

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